

AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION

Age related Macular degeneration (ARMD) is the leading cause of severe central visual loss in 1 or both eyes in people over 50 years of age in the United States. It is estimated that currently that up to 16.7 million people are affected by ARMD in the United states. Two types of ARMD have been identified: Wet and Dry ARMD. Wet ARMD can be managed very well. Dry ARMD thus far can be controlled up to an extent.

Symptoms of ARMD:

1. An inability to see straight forward. An affected person may feel like a black spot is blocking the eye from seeing straight ahead.
2. Seeing objects that should be straight as wavy. For instance, when reading, words may seem curved or wavy.
3. Seeing double when opening one eye only.
4. New spectacles not aiding one to see better.

People with the following risk factors may be at risk for ARMD:

- Older people
- White people seem to have a greater chance of developing ARMD
- A family member with ARMD.
- Smokers
- Overweight/obese people
- Hypertensive people

Early diagnosis is the key to preventing an affected person from permanently losing eyesight.

Treatment:

- Dry ARMD can be treated with change in lifestyle such as stopping smoking, increasing the intake of green leafy vegetables and supplementation with a clinically proven multivitamin complex.
- Wet ARMD can be managed with the changes mentioned above in lifestyle along with injection of highly effective into the eye. This treatment has to be injected into the eye once a month for three months and thereafter certain people may require it chronically as the doctor sees fit to preserve vision.
- Atrophy as a result of advanced Wet/Dry ARMD unfortunately currently has no cure available. Management would involve reading aids. Management is currently being investigated in large-scale studies being conducted globally.

The above treatments are in line with the latest American Academy of Ophthalmology and South African Society of Vitreoretinal surgeon guidelines for the management of ARMD.