

# WHAT TO ASK YOUR EYE HEALTH PROFESSIONAL: AT RISK OF AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD)



Macular  
Disease  
Foundation  
AUSTRALIA

## What is AMD?

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AMD is a chronic and progressive disease of the macula, the part of the retina responsible for detailed central vision. As AMD progresses, it can affect your ability to read, drive and recognise faces. It doesn't result in total vision loss or blindness, as your peripheral (side) vision remains unaffected.

Approximately one in seven Australians over the age of 50 have some evidence of AMD.

## Risk factors for AMD

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**Age:** The risk of AMD increases significantly with age.

**Family history:** If you have a first-degree family member (e.g. parent or sibling) with AMD, you are at greater risk of developing it. Many cases of AMD have a genetic link.

**Smoking:** Smokers are more likely to develop AMD and may develop it earlier than non-smokers. The risk of AMD reduces when you stop smoking.

Eating a healthy well-balanced diet which includes eye friendly foods also reduces the risk of AMD.

## Suggested questions

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It can be overwhelming to know that you're at risk of developing AMD. The following list of questions may help with what to ask.

### About diet and lifestyle

- Can I do anything to reduce my risk?
- Should I change my diet?
- Should I take a dietary supplement? If so, which one?
- Where can I get help to quit smoking?

### About changes in vision

- How will I know if I have AMD?
- What symptoms should I look for?
- What is an Amsler grid? How do I use it?
- What should I do if my sight changes?
- Can AMD be treated? What kind of treatment is available?

### Contacting your eye health professional

- How often should I have my eyes checked?
- When should I contact you as a matter of urgency?
- What is the contact number to call if I have an emergency after hours or on weekends?

## When visiting an eye health professional

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- write down any questions you might have beforehand and take them to your appointment
- it may help to take notes or have a friend or family member present
- ask your eye health professional to write down your diagnosis and any instructions you need to follow
- don't be afraid to repeat a question if you don't fully understand the answer.

# Eye health checklist

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- have regular eye examinations, including a check of the macula
- don't smoke
- live a healthy lifestyle, control your weight, and exercise regularly
- make sure your diet includes two-three servings of fish (oily fish is preferable) per week, daily serves of dark green leafy vegetables, daily serves of fruit, and a handful of nuts a week
- limit your consumption of fats and oils
- choose low glycemc index (GI) carbohydrates instead of high GI, whenever possible
- ask your doctor about taking a dietary supplement if food intake is inadequate
- protect your eyes from sunlight with sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat
- use an Amsler grid regularly to check for changes in your vision.

**Important:** Check with your doctor before making any changes to your diet or lifestyle.

## Need more information?

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You can find more information about macular disease on our website:  
[www.mdfoundation.com.au](http://www.mdfoundation.com.au)

You can also access our free, personalised support services and order information kits and Amsler grids by calling our National Helpline on **1800 111 709**.

M DFA has a free newsletter and you can sign up to receive invitations to education sessions and events in your area.

Macular Disease Foundation Australia is committed to reducing the incidence and impact of macular disease, by providing up-to-date information, advice and support.

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