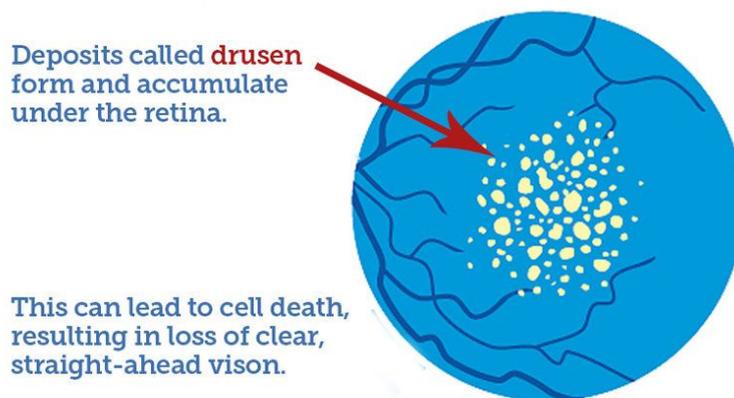




Early Stage of Age-related Macula Degeneration

All parts of the body change as we age and it is normal to see differences in the way the retina looks in older people. There may be changes to the colour of the retina or tiny, fatty deposits called drusen may appear.



Some people have more significant changes to their retina, for example, quite a lot of small drusen, several large drusen or bigger areas of colour abnormality. These people may be diagnosed with 'early' age-related macula degeneration (AMD).

It's important to note that many people with this early stage of AMD might not develop sight loss, as the progress of the disease varies considerably between individuals. However, it is still important to detect AMD as soon as possible to begin management of the disease.

Detecting early AMD

Until quite recently, most people that have AMD would remain unaware that they had it, until it began to affect their sight. Nowadays however, there are very sophisticated eye scanning machines that are becoming increasingly available in opticians which is leading the detection and diagnoses of AMD.

Such as the Macula Pigment Screener II (MPS II). This machine provides an easy test that will give a reading with the density of your Macular Pigment. With the aid of MPS II eye care professionals can take a proactive, preventative approach to the growing global problem of age-related macular degeneration.



An eye test is recommended every two years if you are over 60, and every year if you are over 70. Examination of the macula should be part of the eye screening. The macula pigment density is usually an indication of whether you are at risk of developing AMD.

How can I stop early AMD developing?

If you are diagnosed with AMD, there are some things you can do to reduce the likelihood of the disease progressing.

1. If you smoke, stop. Smokers are four times more likely to develop AMD than non-smokers. Smoking kills the cells of the retina, reduces the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the eye and damages blood vessels. Smoking causes AMD to progress faster and makes treatment less effective.
2. Take moderate exercise to maintain a healthy weight and normal blood pressure.
3. Eat a healthy diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, especially green, leafy vegetables. These contain nutrients that are thought to be important to eye health.

Unfortunately, taking these precautions does not completely prevent AMD progressing in everyone. If the disease does progress, your vision will be affected to some extent and if not monitored and managed, it could lead to blindness.

Monitoring your vision

If you have early AMD it is a good idea to monitor your vision every week or so to spot changes early. You can do this very simply by closing one eye and looking at window frames or door posts to see if there is any distortion.

Whatever the stage of your AMD, if you have sudden changes to your vision, see your optometrist urgently – the same day if possible.