

Anti-VEGF Treatments

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What Is Avastin?

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Avastin is a drug used to treat wet [age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\)](#). It is also used to treat diabetic eye disease and other problems of the [retina](#). It is injected into the eye to help slow vision loss from these diseases.

Avastin is the brand name for the drug, which is called bevacizumab. It blocks the growth and leaking of fluid from abnormal blood vessels in the back of the eye. Those blood vessels can leak and affect vision, causing vision loss from wet AMD and diabetic eye disease.

Avastin was first approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat different types of cancer. Its use to treat eye disease is considered an "off-label" use. The FDA allows "off label" drug use if doctors are well informed about the product and studies prove the drug is helpful. Many studies have shown Avastin as safe and effective for eye disease since it was first used in 2005.

Lucentis® (ranibizumab) and Eylea® (aflibercept) are other drugs like Avastin. Research shows each of these drugs are effective in slowing vision loss.

How does Avastin work?

Abnormal blood vessels need a body chemical called VEGF to grow. Avastin blocks VEGF, slowing the growth of blood vessels in the eye. Drugs that block the trouble-causing VEGF are called anti-VEGF drugs.

What conditions are treated with Avastin?

Avastin is used to treat the following eye problems:

- wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- [swelling of the retina, called macular edema](#)
- [diabetic retinopathy](#)
- retinal vein occlusion

What happens during Avastin treatment?

During an outpatient procedure, your ophthalmologist first numbs the eye to block pain. Then your doctor injects the Avastin directly into your eye.

Before the procedure, your ophthalmologist will clean your eye to prevent infection and numb your eye with medicine. A very thin needle is passed through the white part of your eye and the drug is injected. Usually you do not see the needle itself. You may need to continue having these injections over many months.

What are the risks of Avastin treatment?

Every treatment can have side effects. It is important to understand the benefits and risks of any treatment you might have.

Common side effects include:

- [eye redness](#)
- feeling like something is in your eye
- [dry](#) or [itchy](#) eyes
- eye discomfort
- [temporary blurry vision](#)
- [floaters](#)

Any eye injection, including Avastin, may cause these problems, which are very rare:

- [being extra sensitive to light](#)
- [eye pain](#)
- swelling inside the eye
- eye infection
- [detached retina](#) (where the retina lifts up from the back of the eye)
- [cataracts](#) (clouding of the eye's normally clear lens)

Call your ophthalmologist right away if you have any of these problems within a few days of Avastin treatment.

If you have any questions about your eyes or your vision, be sure to ask. Your ophthalmologist is committed to protecting your sight.

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AMD steals sight without warning

It's the leading cause of blindness among older Americans.

You may lose central vision before realizing you have age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

EyeCare America® offers free exams to qualifying seniors.
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