BrightFocus® Foundation
Cure in Mind. Cure in Sight.

FACT SHEET

Age-Related Macular Degeneration: Facts & Figures

Advanced age-related macular degeneration a leading cause of irreversible blindness and visual impairment in the world. As many as 11 million people in the United States have some form of age-related macular degeneration. Learn the facts about macular degeneration.

Quick Facts about Macular Degeneration

Macular degeneration can be very serious.

- Macular degeneration is a leading cause of vision loss in Americans 60 years of age and older.
- Advanced age-related macular degeneration is a leading cause of irreversible blindness and visual impairment in the world.
- Age-related macular degeneration is an irreversible destruction of the macula, which leads to loss of the sharp, fine-detail, "straight ahead" vision required for activities like reading, driving, recognizing faces, and seeing the world in color.

Macular degeneration is widespread.

- As many as 11 million people in the United States have some form of age-related macular degeneration. This number is expected to double to nearly 22 million by

- The number of people living with macular degeneration is expected to reach 196 million worldwide by 2020 and increase to 288 million by 2040.
- Age is a prominent risk factor for age-related macular degeneration. The risk of getting advanced age-related macular degeneration increases from 2% for those ages 50-59, to nearly 30% for those over the age of 75.

Macular degeneration is expensive, and will only become more expensive as the population aged 65 and older increases.

- Estimates of the global cost of visual impairment due to age-related macular degeneration is $343 billion, including $255 billion in direct health care costs.
- Estimates of the direct health care costs of visual impairment due to age-related macular degeneration in the US, Canada, and Cuba (WHO subregion AMR-A), collectively, is approximately US$98 billion.
- The global cost of vision loss due to all causes is estimated to be nearly $3 trillion dollars for the 733 million people living with low vision and blindness worldwide. In North America alone, the direct cost for vision loss due to all causes was $512.8 billion, and the indirect costs were $179 billion.

There are two forms of macular degeneration: dry and wet.

- The dry form of macular degeneration, in which the light sensitive cells of the macula slowly break down, is the most common type, accounting for 90 percent of diagnosed cases.
- Wet macular degeneration accounts for approximately 10 percent of cases, but results in 90 percent of legal blindness. It is considered advanced macular degeneration (there is no early or intermediate stage of wet macular degeneration). Wet macular degeneration is always preceded by the dry form of the disease.
- It is possible for dry macular degeneration to advance and cause loss of vision without turning into the wet form of the disease; however, it is also possible for early-stage dry age-related macular degeneration to suddenly change into the

An eye care professional can help diagnose macular degeneration and determine which form(s) of the disease you have.

- To help diagnose macular degeneration, an eye care professional will perform a dilated eye exam, fundoscopy, a visual acuity test, and fundus photography. If wet age-related macular degeneration is suspected, fluorescein angiography may be performed, in which dye is used to detect leaking blood vessels. The patient may also be asked to look at an **Amsler grid**.

There is no treatment or cure for advanced dry macular degeneration. But a specific high-dose formula of antioxidant vitamins and zinc may delay or prevent intermediate macular degeneration from progressing to the advanced stage.

- **Approved drugs and medications:**
  - Beovu® (brolucizumab)
  - Eylea™ (aflibercept),
  - Lucentis® (ranibizumab)
  - Macugen® (pegaptanib)

- **Photodynamic therapy:**
  - Treatment that can help control the abnormal blood vessel growth and bleeding in the macula for those with wet macular degeneration)

- **Physicians have also used:**
  - Avastin™ (bevacizumab injection), a cancer therapy manufactured by the company that makes Lucentis, as an "off-label" treatment for wet macular degeneration.

- **Vision rehabilitation and low vision aids:**
  - Help improve the quality of life for those who are visually impaired

A healthy lifestyle may help reduce the risk of developing macular

- The following lifestyle changes are recommended:
  - Don't smoke
  - Exercise regularly
  - Keep blood pressure in a normal range and control other medical conditions
  - Maintain a healthy weight
  - Eat a diet high in fruits, vegetables and fish, and in low foods that rapidly raise blood sugar
  - Protect eyes from overexposure to sunlight with sunglasses and hats

Promising Research

Ongoing research is exploring environmental, genetic, and dietary factors that may contribute to macular degeneration. New treatment strategies are also being investigated, including:

- retinal cell transplants
- drugs to prevent or slow disease progress
- radiation therapy
- gene therapies
- a computer chip implanted in the retina that may help simulate vision
- agents that will prevent new blood vessel growth under the macula.

For sources of these facts and figures, see our **Sources for Macular Degeneration** page.

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