



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: CHECK YOUR VISION



February is National Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and Low Vision Awareness Month. AMD is a leading cause of vision loss, affecting more and more Americans each year. According to the National Eye Institute, 4.2 million Americans ages 40 and older are visually impaired. By 2030, when the last baby boomers turn 65, that number is projected to reach 7.2 million.

What is low vision?

Low vision is when even with regular glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery, people have difficulty seeing, which makes everyday tasks difficult to do.

What is AMD?

AMD is an eye disease that can blur your central vision. It slowly steals vision as it

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Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

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affects the retina, a paper-thin tissue lining the back of the eye, and causes the cells in the area to die.

Am I at risk for AMD or low vision?

Your risk increases as you get older. People age 55 and older are more likely to have low vision and AMD. The risk is higher for people who:

- Have a family history of AMD
- Are Caucasian
- Smoke

If you're at risk for AMD or low vision because of your age, family history, or other factors, it's important to get regular eye exams. You can have a comprehensive dilated eye exam to check for common eye problems. If you have not had an exam in a while, schedule one now.

How can I lower my risk for AMD?

Research shows that you may be able to lower your risk of AMD and reduce vision loss by making these healthy choices:

- Quit smoking — or don't start.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Eat healthy foods, including leafy green vegetables and fish.
- Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities around the home, such as painting, yard work, and home repairs.
- Wear sunglasses that block 99% to 100% of ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation.
- Wash your hands before taking out your contacts, and cleanse your contact lenses properly to avoid infection.
- Practice workplace eye safety.

AMD is a progressive disease — that means symptoms usually get worse over time. You may notice mild symptoms, like mild blurriness in your central vision or trouble seeing in low lighting. Over time, colors might seem less bright



and the blurry area may get bigger or you may see blank spots. Straight lines looking wavy is a warning sign for advanced AMD. If you notice this symptom, see your eye doctor right away.

If you have noticed low vision, here are some things you can do to help increase vision:

- Improve the lighting in your home and office. This may not necessarily mean that you should increase the lighting or the brightness, but instead reduce the glare, which is often a problem for people with low vision.
- Use high contrast for reading and writing.
- Use large print books or try other media, like books on CD or an e-reader.
- Use a handheld magnifier.

Be sure to check your vision regularly by visiting an eye doctor to keep track of how your eyes are doing with regular eye exams. Eating healthy, staying active, and not smoking are ways you can improve and maintain your vision.

RESOURCES:

- <https://eye.ufl.edu/2021/02/01/february-is-amd-macular-degeneration-low-vision-awareness-month>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/healthyvisionmonth>
- <https://lighthouseguild.org/low-vision-awareness-month>

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Written by: Natalie Jones
Edited by: Alyssa Simms
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images: 123RF.com

