

Vitamins and Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Age-related Macular Degeneration (**AMD**) is the leading cause of blindness among people 65 and older in the United States. It is a degenerative disease that is part of the aging process. Evidence has shown that the uncontrolled release of oxidants, free radicals and reactant oxygen species contribute to the disease. The Age- Related Eye Disease Studies (**AREDS and AREDS 2**) are the only prospective, randomized placebo-controlled, masked clinical trials to show a benefit from taking oral antioxidants. **The risk of progression to advanced AMD was reduced by 25% over a 5-year period.** Long term follow up of the patients at 10 years showed the beneficial effect persisted.

Risk factors that predispose a patient to develop AMD:

- Age
- Female
- Genotype (Complement factor H and 18 other genes)
- Caucasian race
- Smoking (current or past smokers)
- Obesity (defined as BMI over 25)
- Nutrition
- ? Hypertension
- ? Hypercholesterolemia
- ? Exposure to short-wave length light

The AREDS 2 vitamins.

- Vitamin C 500 mg
- Vitamin E 400 IU
- Zinc oxide 80 mg (25 mg may be enough)
- Cupric oxide 2 mg
- Lutein 10 mg/ Zeaxanthin 2 mg (helps only if dietary deficit)

What else can you do?

- Take fish oil (1000 mg omega-3 fatty acids/day). Helps prevent progression of Dry AMD to more advanced Dry AMD.
- Eat a Mediterranean-style diet with plentiful colored vegetables, nuts, fish, and limited amounts of meat and processed food.
- Maintain normal weight and exercise daily
- Monitor central vision with Amsler grid or equivalent
- Call with central vision changes. Early intervention for complicated AMD gives better results