

# OXIHER HEALTH PRIORITIES

## FOCUS ON AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION

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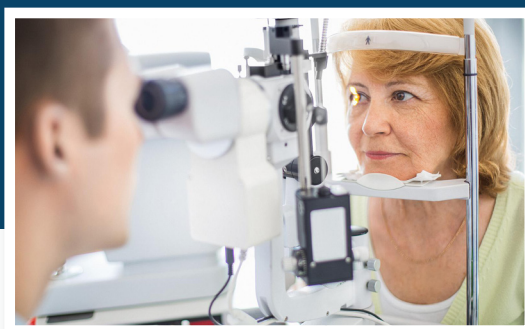
INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH EQUITY AND RESEARCH

Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of vision loss for adults over 60, affecting millions worldwide. Discover the risk factors, prevention strategies, and cutting-edge treatments making a difference in the fight against AMD.

### Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) affects 19.8 million Americans

Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD), an incurable eye disease, is the leading cause of vision loss and blindness for adults 60 and over according to the [Centers for Disease Control](#). An estimated 19.8 million Americans aged 40 and above are affected.

February is Age-Related Macular Degeneration and Low Vision Awareness Month, which highlights the impact of AMD on individuals, particularly our senior population, and the rippling effects it has on their support system. Continue reading to learn about AMD risk factors and what you can do to reduce vision loss due to macular degeneration.



### What is Age-related Macular Degeneration?

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is an eye condition that causes blurred central vision due to damage to the macula, the part of the eye responsible for sharp, detailed vision. AMD progresses over time, varying from person to person, but it does not affect peripheral (side) vision. Although it does not lead to total blindness, the loss of central vision can make everyday tasks like reading, driving and recognizing faces challenging.

There are two types of AMD:

**Dry AMD:** The most common form, accounting for 80% of cases, occurs when the macula thins gradually, often accompanied by protein deposits beneath the retina that slowly distort vision. It develops in three stages (early, intermediate and advanced). There is no treatment for advanced dry AMD.

**Wet AMD:** A less common, faster-progressing form develops in advanced AMD. It is caused by abnormal blood vessel growth beneath the retina, which can leak and scar the macula.

Neither type is painful, and AMD does not change the appearance of the eyes. Early signs, like dark spots, blurry vision or difficulty seeing straight lines, can be subtle. If you notice these symptoms or a sudden decline in vision, consult an eye care professional immediately.



Persons with AMD may experience dark spots or blurring in the center of their field of vision as shown above.

### Advanced Vision Care at Ochsner Vision Center

More than 10 locations across Louisiana, many of which are inside [Ochsner Eye Centers](#), provide expert eye care. Within the Eye Center, ophthalmologists can diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions, including AMD. As an added bonus, patients who complete an eye exam and purchase contacts from an Ochsner Vision Center may qualify for eligible rebates. If you prefer glasses, a wide assortment of options to suit any style is always on hand. Multiple insurance plans are accepted including Humana-Ochsner Network, Humana Gold, EyeMed, Community EyeCare, and others. The dedicated team of ophthalmologists, optometrists, and eye care specialists are committed to improving your vision—and quality of life.

### Risk Factors Associated with AMD and What You Can Do to Protect Yourself

Age is the most significant risk factor. The following identifiers also put you at an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration.

- Female
- White
- History of smoking
- Obesity
- Family history and genetics
- Heart disease
- Diets high in saturated fats and cholesterol

Addressing the factors within your control such as not smoking, adopting diets high in fruits, vegetables and fish, and low in foods that rapidly raise blood sugar (such as white grains, sugar-sweetened beverages, candy, potatoes, sugar or honey); exercising regularly; maintaining a healthy weight and blood pressure; and protecting your eyes from harmful ultraviolet light can all reduce your risk of vision loss.

### Your Best Defense

However, the best defense is connecting with your provider for a comprehensive eye exam—even if you do not need glasses or contacts. For adults with no symptoms, the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends eye exams by the age of 40 if you have never received an exam in the past. For individuals 65 and older, eye exams are recommended yearly and no more than two years should pass between exams.

Connecting with your provider will allow for the correct course of treatment to be determined. Examples include traditional methods such as corrective lenses, longer-lasting drugs, and laser treatments for wet AMD. Others include more promising research such as gene therapy (wet AMD) and stem cell replacement for dry AMD.

Ochsner's **Dr. Joseph Benevento**, Sr. Physician and Chair, Ophthalmology, also shares that injectable medications are now available for advanced dry AMD that can slow but not reverse the disease. "Because AMD can start without symptoms and there are ways to slow its progression and slow or prevent vision loss, people should continue to have annual screening exams."



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**The Ochsner-Xavier Institute for Health Equity and Research (OXIHER)** regularly shines a light on some of the most critical health needs affecting the communities we serve. OXIHER works in alignment with Healthy State to develop effective strategies to address and improve overall population health.