



HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

OFFICE ON AGING

1300 S. GRAND AVENUE • BUILDING B, 2ND FLOOR • SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA • 92705
PHONE: (714) 567-7500 • FAX: (714) 567-5021 • TDD: (714) 550-9472



HAVE YOU HAD AN EYE EXAM LATELY?

By: Erin Ulibarri, MPH, CHES

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of vision loss and legal blindness in adults over 60 years old in the United States, affecting 1.6 million people. People with AMD may not even realize that they have this disease, slowly robbing people of their vision. AMD destroys a person's central vision, leaving the peripheral vision intact

Do you feel like you are looking at the world out of the corner of your eye rather than straight ahead?

Other symptoms of Age-Related Macular Degeneration include blurred vision, development of blind spots, distorted vision, and straight lines appearing crooked. You can test yourself for AMD with a simple test. Amsler grids allow you to test your vision at home. These grids, instructions included, are available by calling the Office on Aging at (800) 510-2020 or (714) 567-7500. If you find that your vision is blurred or straight lines appear crooked, see your eye doctor for further consultation

There are some risk factors that a person cannot control and others that are controllable. Age is the most crucial factor in the development of AMD; as a person gets older, the chance of getting the disease increases. Other things that a person cannot control are ethnicity (Caucasians are affected more than others), family history, and gender (women more than men). Factors that a person has control over are smoking and obesity.

Treatment depends on the type of AMD that a person is diagnosed with, which an optometrist can determine. Treatment options might include surgery or medication; however one type of AMD has no treatment options available. The earlier AMD is found, the more likely the treatment will be successful. It is recommended that a person who is not at special risk for AMD have an eye exam every 2-4 years for those aged 40-64 and every 1-2 years for people 65 and older.

Recent research has found that eating vegetables containing yellow pigments may protect women from age-related vision loss. Other ways a person can protect themselves from vision loss are eating a healthy diet, exercising, maintaining low blood pressure, not being overweight, and not smoking.

The County of Orange Office on Aging has a supply of Amsler grids available. Call **(800) 510-2020** or **(714) 567-7500** and request a grid and macular degeneration fact sheet from our friendly and knowledgeable specialists. The Office on Aging also has resource information on meals, in-home care, healthcare, transportation, legal, caregiving assistance, prescription insurance, exercise classes and much more!

PAULA BURRIER-LUND, Director, Housing & Community Services Department

KAREN ROPER, Executive Director, Office on Aging

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