



## **Seattle Eye M.D.s**

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### **Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)**

Age related macular degeneration (AMD) is one of the most common causes of poor vision after age 60. Although the specific cause is unknown, AMD seems to be part of aging. While age is the most significant risk factor for developing AMD, heredity, blue eyes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and smoking have also been identified as risk factors. AMD accounts for 90 percent of new legal blindness in the US.

Nine out of 10 people who have AMD have the dry form, which results in thinning of the macula, the area of the retina responsible for central vision. Dry AMD takes many years to develop. Currently there is no treatment.

The wet form of AMD occurs much less frequently (one out of 10 people) but is more serious.

Laser surgery is the only proven effective treatment, to date, for wet AMD. The procedure usually does not improve vision but prevents further loss of vision.

The visual symptoms of AMD involve loss of central vision. While peripheral vision is unaffected, one loses the sharp, straight-ahead vision necessary for driving, reading, recognizing faces, and generally looking at detail. Imagine being able to see a clock on the wall but unable to make out the time or unable to read because you could not see parts of words on the page.

Promising AMD research is being done on many fronts. In the meantime, high-intensity reading lamps, magnifiers and other low-vision aids help people with AMD make the most of remaining vision.