

Early detection of AMD reduces risk of blindness

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a disease associated with aging that gradually destroys sharp, central vision. Central vision is needed for seeing objects clearly and for common daily tasks such as reading.

AMD affects the macula, the part of the eye that allows you to see fine detail.

The macula has a high concentration of light-sensitive cells, and is located at the back of the eye.

At its early stage, AMD may cause slightly blurred or distorted vision which is not often noticeable. If it is not treated in time, it may lead to loss of vision.

AMD is a leading cause of vision loss among people over the age of 60, particularly in Western countries. Aging is the major cause of AMD. Other risk factors are smoking, family history, race, cardiovascular diseases and high cholesterol diet.

AMD occurs in two forms: dry and wet .

Dry AMD accounts for about 90 per cent of cases. The most common symptom is slightly blurred vision. The remaining 10 per cent are wet AMD, which are a crossover from dry AMD. It occurs when abnormal blood vessels start to grow under the macula, causing the fragile blood vessels to burst and blood to flow from the damaged vessels. Damage to the macula occurs rapidly.

Treatments for wet AMD include the use of lasers, photodynamic therapy (PDT), surgery, injection of anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) agents into the eye, and combining PDT with anti-VEGF.

However, most of these treatments can only prevent the disease from advancing. Taking substances, like vitamin A, C, E, zinc and lutein, may also reduce the risk of advanced AMD.

Early detection of AMD can prevent it from progressing and reduces the risk of vision loss. It is advisable for anyone over the age of 50 to have a comprehensive eye examination even though he or she is not experiencing any AMD symptoms.