



# SpaMedica

## AMD

## Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Information booklet for patients

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# About this booklet

This booklet has been written to provide you with information about age-related macular degeneration, commonly referred to as AMD.

Please take the time to read this booklet as it, hopefully, can answer some of the questions you may have about the condition and will help you through the next steps of your AMD journey.

SpaMedica has an experienced and friendly team who are here to support you and answer any questions you may have about AMD and what happens next.

Please call us on 0161 838 0870 if you would like to speak to a member of our AMD team.



# About age-related macular degeneration

Age-related macular degeneration, commonly referred to as AMD, is the most common cause of sight loss in the developed world. In the UK more than 600,000 people are affected by AMD. There are two types of AMD – wet and dry.

Wet AMD develops when abnormal blood vessels leak into the macular (this is the small central point of the retina, which is responsible for our central vision) and cause scarring and loss of central vision. Wet AMD can develop rapidly. It can be treated if caught quickly.

Dry AMD is a slow deterioration of the cells of the macular. The ‘dry’ doesn’t mean you have dry eyes, it is just used as a term to differentiate it from wet AMD. No treatment has been proven to prevent or cure dry AMD.

**Without treatment, your vision may get worse.** This can happen gradually over several years (dry AMD), or quickly over a few weeks or months (wet AMD).

**The exact cause is unknown.** It's been linked to smoking, high blood pressure, being overweight and having a family history of AMD.

# Symptoms

AMD affects the middle part of your vision, not the edges (peripheral vision). You can get AMD in one eye or both and symptoms include:

- ★ Gaps or dark spots across your vision
- ★ Words may become distorted or jumbled on a page
- ★ Words may disappear when reading
- ★ Straight lines, such as door frames, may appear distorted or bent

Reduction in vision may be quick or happen over a number of years.



## Your AMD assessment

When you're referred with suspected AMD the first thing we will do is conduct an eye health check and assessment for both your eyes at our AMD clinic.

You can be reassured we will give you a warm welcome, guide you through your assessment and answer any questions you may have about AMD. We understand that you may be worried or stressed and our expert staff are on-hand to support you.

Your eyes will be dilated at this appointment – please note dilating the eyes causes blurred vision and sensitivity to light, so you won't be able to drive; so it's important to make sure you organise a lift or arrange transport to/from the hospital.

*SpaMedica provides free transport for some patients, based on your location and other criteria – if you're struggling to find transport please speak to a member of our Referrals team to see if you qualify for free transport.*

If you wear contact lenses these should not be worn at least 48 hours before your appointment – both eyes will be checked at your assessment.

# Your AMD assessment

We will run through the following series of tests and checks at your assessment:

- ★ **Vision test** - similar to the ones you have at your opticians, but using different charts.
- ★ **Eye diagnostics** - where we take a magnified colour photo of your eyes and an imaging test that takes a cross-section image of your retina.
- ★ **Dye test** - a dye will be injected into your arm, this travels to and highlights the blood vessels in your eyes. A specialist eye photographer will take photos of your eyes while the dye is present.

One of our nurses will be with you throughout the process to talk through what's happening and support you.



# Your diagnosis

Our consultant ophthalmologist will receive the results and photos from your tests and review these. They will provide a diagnosis and recommend any appropriate treatment.

You will receive a letter or call to let you know what the diagnosis is and, if AMD is confirmed, you will be informed of your next steps.

If your AMD can be treated you will be booked into a SpaMedica AMD Clinic to begin your treatment course.





## Attending our AMD clinic

When you attend your first session with us at our AMD clinic we'll discuss the next steps of the AMD treatment with you, what your treatment involves and answer any questions you may have. If you are happy to go ahead with the treatment course then we will ask you to sign a consent form. Please let us know if you have a lasting power of attorney (LPA) or require support for giving consent.

Each of your AMD Clinic visits will consist of a vision test and scan to check your eyes and treatment will be an injection in the eye (using a very small needle) using a specially formulated drug (called anti-VEGF), which helps to reduce any further leakage from the abnormal vessels.

It is normal to feel anxious about your treatment and we are here to help. Please contact us on 0161 838 0870 if you have any questions. We have a friendly team of experts who are here to make you as comfortable as possible and support you throughout your time with us.

# AMD treatment

There is currently no treatment for dry AMD. If your condition is diagnosed early enough, you can take steps to help slow its progression, such as taking vitamin supplements, having a healthy diet and not smoking.

Wet AMD can be treated if caught early – so it is important to see your optician as soon as possible if you are experiencing any problems with your vision.

Most people will receive a course of treatment – this is a special drug injected into the eye. The drugs used are called ‘anti-VEGF’ drugs, the ones most commonly used are Lucentis (ranibizumab) and Eylea (aflibercept). *VEGF (Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor) is the chemical in the body responsible for the development of healthy blood vessels. In wet AMD too much VEGF is produced in the eye, causing the growth of unwanted, unhealthy blood vessels.*

Treatment of AMD cannot undo the changes present in your eyes – the goal of treatment is to prevent further loss of vision.

# AMD treatment - eye injections

Firstly, it is perfectly normal to feel anxious about having an eye injection, but they are not as bad as they sound...

- ★ You will not feel any pain, as you are given anaesthetic eye drops to numb the eye
- ★ The needle used for the injection is very small – just 12mm (½ inch) long
- ★ The needle goes into the corner of your eye so you will not see it
- ★ Injections stop vision getting worse in 9 out of 10 people and improves vision in 3 out of 10 people
- ★ Injections are usually given every 2 months for as long as necessary

Following diagnosis you will usually be given a dose of three injections, once a month for three months. You will then be assessed to see if more are required.

If you're still concerned about having an eye injection, the Macular Society offer a helpline (0300 3030 111) where you can be put in touch with other people who've had injections for support and advice.

## AMD treatment - risks

As with any medical procedure, there is a small risk of complications following anti-VEGF treatment. Most complications that might occur are from the injection itself, rather than the drug.

For most patients, the benefit of the treatment outweighs the small risk of injection injury. The following are the major potential risks and side effects of anti-VEGF injections, but this is not a complete list of all risks. These risks are all rare. Significant loss of vision due to this treatment is also very rare.

- ★ Serious eye infection (one in 2,000 cases)
- ★ Detached retina
- ★ Increase in eye pressure
- ★ Blood clots and bleeding in the eye
- ★ Inflammation inside the eye
- ★ Cataract

## AMD treatment - risks

Some common side effects that could occur include:

- ★ Red eye (there is usually a bleed or bruise on the white part of the eye at the point of injection, which clears in a week or two)
- ★ Sore and gritty eye (slight ache and discomfort lasting a day or two)
- ★ ‘Blobs’ or ‘small specks’ in your vision (‘floaters’) might be seen for a few days after the injection. Also, there could be transient flashing lights or swirls of light immediately after the injection

You should not be given anti-VEGF if you have any of the following conditions:

- ★ Allergy to anti-VEGF or any of its ingredients
- ★ If you have an infection in or around either eye or severe infection anywhere in your body
- ★ If you are trying to become pregnant, are already pregnant, or are breastfeeding



**If you require urgent help, please call us on our  
emergency number:**

**0161 838 0883**

Please call us if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- ★ Throbbing pain in or around your eye
- ★ A severe frontal headache with, or without, nausea and vomiting. Persistent even after taking painkillers
- ★ Progressive deterioration of vision, or loss of vision
- ★ Increasing redness in the eye

## Further information

In addition to support from our team at SpaMedica, you may find it useful to get in touch with support groups such as:



**Macular Society** – they have a wide range of support services and a great support helpline.

**T: 0300 3030 111**

**W: [www.macularsociety.org](http://www.macularsociety.org)**



**RNIB** – they offer practical advice about living with sight loss and a support helpline.

**T: 0303 123 9999**

**W: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)**



## How to contact us

**SpaMedica AMD Clinic**  
**Whelmar House**  
**Southway**  
**SKELMERSDALE**  
**WN8 6NN**

**T: 0330 058 4280**

**E: [clinic@spamedica.co.uk](mailto:clinic@spamedica.co.uk)**

**SpaMedica Head Office**  
**SpaMedica House**  
**43 Churchgate**  
**BOLTON**  
**BL1 1HU**

Please contact us on our head office number if you have any queries relating to your eyes or treatment.

This number is available 24 hours per day, 365 days of the year.



**[www.spamedica.co.uk](http://www.spamedica.co.uk)**