



Macular Degeneration

By Thomas P. Finley, OD



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Dr. Finley received his Bachelor of Science degree from St. Francis College in Pennsylvania, and his Doctorate of Optometry from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. Following graduation, he served as an optometrist in the U.S. Air Force and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and the Commendation Medal.

Dr. Finley has served as an adjunct clinical professor for three optometry schools and has been a clinical investigator for two major contact lens companies. He has published several articles in professional and trade journals and local newspapers, as well as lectured at many conferences throughout the area.

Dr. Finley is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, a Fellow of the Virginia Academy of Optometry, and a member of the American Optometric Association, Virginia Optometric Association, Northern Virginia Optometric Society, and Armed Forces Optometric Society. He is an Advisory Board member for TLC Laser Eye Centers, and area Administrator for Vision Source, a national network of independent optometrists.

Locally, Dr. Finley serves as an active member of the Herndon Rotary Club (past president), Chamber of Commerce (past board member), Optimist Club (youth sports' coach), Knights of Columbus (past board member), and current board member for the Jeannie Schmidt Free Clinic. He was awarded Herndon's "Distinguished Service Award," the Chamber of Commerce's "Small Business of the Year Award," and The Times Newspapers "Best Eye Doctor Award." He has owned his practice in Herndon since 1989.

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Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is one of the leading causes of severe vision loss among people over age 50. It negatively affects our ability to see clearly making it extremely difficult or impossible to do many of our daily tasks and activities.

Macular degeneration results from changes to the sensitive central portion of the retina in the back of the eye. The macular area is responsible for clear sharp central vision and is many times more sensitive than the rest of the retina. It is the portion of the eye that allows us to see sharp details and bright colors.

There are two types of macular degeneration: dry and wet. The dry form is significantly more common and tends to be less debilitating. It is thought to be a normal change that occurs as we get older, and usually progresses very slowly and gradually.

The wet form, which is less

common, can be more debilitating if left untreated. Wet macular degeneration almost always occurs in people who already have dry macular degeneration and oftentimes results in legal blindness. Early detection and management is vital in minimizing damage.

Some of the symptoms of macular degeneration are:

- A gradual loss of ability to see objects clearly.
- Objects appearing distorted in shape or straight lines that appear wavy or crooked.
- A gradual loss of clear color vision.
- A dark empty area appearing in the center or just off-center of your vision.

Comprehensive eye examinations are the only way to determine the overall health of your eyes and if there are any signs of macular degeneration. If there is leakage, referral to a retinal specialist for treatment is

critical. Early detection and management is extremely important.

Who Gets Macular Degeneration?

If one of your blood relatives has macular degeneration, then you will be more prone to also develop it. Women tend to be at greater risk than men.

Smokers are more prone to develop macular degeneration because smoking causes a decrease of oxygen reaching the macular area of the eyes.

What Can I Do To Prevent Macular Degeneration From Occurring?

Wearing sunglasses and brimmed hats outdoors will protect your eyes from the sun. Avoid eating fatty foods and smoking.

Supplementing your diet with a good multivitamin, antioxidants, and omega-3 fatty acids can help lower your risk of developing AMD, and remember to schedule a comprehensive eye examination at least every year.



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