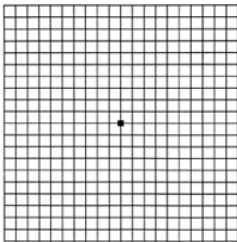


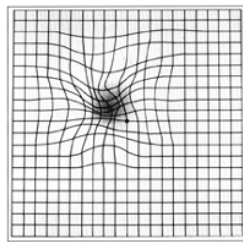
# Macular Degeneration

**What is Macular Degeneration?** It is a disorder that causes a deterioration of the macula (the central part of the eye's retina). The macula allows the eye to see fine details at the center of the field of vision. A functional macula is essential to activities such as reading and driving; however, macular degeneration does not lead to blindness. Macular degeneration has "Dry" and "Wet" forms. "Dry" (atrophic) MD is more common. It occurs when the tissues of the macula thin due to aging and results in gradual vision loss. "Wet" (exudative) MD is less common and results from the formation of abnormal blood vessels underneath the retina. These new blood vessels then leak fluid or blood which blurs central vision and may cause rapid severe vision loss.

**What Causes Macular Degeneration?** The most common type of Macular Degeneration is Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD). Risk factors besides advanced age include family history, cigarette smoking, and being Caucasian. Macular Degeneration is the leading cause of severe vision loss in Caucasians over 65, and by age 75, almost 15% of people have this condition.



This is what an Amsler grid normally looks like.



This is how an Amsler grid might look to someone with Macular Degeneration.

## **What are the Symptoms of Macular Degeneration?**

- Blurred or Distorted Central Vision
- A Dark Area in the Center of Vision
- Straight Lines Look Distorted

**How is Macular Degeneration Detected?** There are several tests your ophthalmologist can use to detect Macular Degeneration. Three methods commonly used are taking the Amsler grid test, viewing the macula with an ophthalmoscope, and taking photographs of the eye called fluorescein angiographs. A sample Amsler grid is shown above.

**Who is Most at Risk?** Macular Degeneration becomes increasingly common among people over 50 as they age. Smokers, Caucasians, and people with a family history are especially at risk.

**How is Macular Degeneration Treated?** Sometimes nutritional supplements such as zinc and antioxidant vitamins help slow the progression of the disease. Certain types of "Wet" MD can be treated with laser surgery or photodynamic therapy. Unfortunately, there is no cure for Macular Degeneration.

**How can Macular Degeneration Be Prevented?** Studies have shown that the use of vitamins and good nutrition may reduce the risk of developing MD. Using cigarettes or other forms of tobacco should be avoided, especially among people with a family history of the disease.

*This document is provided for informational purposes only. Please consult an eye care professional about symptoms that may require medical attention and may or may not be covered by your medical plan and/or routine vision plan.*