



"Excellence in Home Care"

# Low Vision Education

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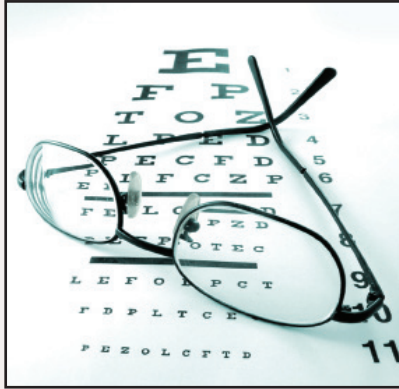
## What is Low Vision?

Low Vision is an impairment to vision that significantly impacts a patient's ability to function on a daily basis. It is not corrected satisfactorily by medical intervention, eye wear or contact lenses. It is often a loss of sharpness but the patient may also complain about light sensitivity, distorted vision, or loss of contrast.

## Risk Factors

Low vision can occur for various reasons, including:

- A result of birth defects.
- Injury to the eyes.
- The natural aging process.
- Age-related macular degeneration (AMD). It is the number one cause of severe vision loss and legal blindness in adults over 60 in the U.S.
- Diseases such as diabetes which can cause macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.
- Cataracts.
- Glaucoma.
- Acquired brain injuries (head injuries/stroke).



## Symptoms and Signs of Low Vision

There are many signs that are indications that you may have vision loss. For example, even with your regular glasses, you may have difficulty with:

- Recognizing faces of friends and relatives.
- Doing things that require you to see well up close, such as reading, cooking, sewing, fixing things around the house, or picking out and matching the color of your clothes.
- Doing things at work or home because lights seem dimmer than they used to.
- Reading street and bus signs or the names of stores.
- Watching television.
- Writing checks.

## What is Macular Degeneration?

Macular degeneration is a condition of the eye that may become progressively worse as people age. It affects as many as 15 million people in the United States alone. The disease attacks an area of the eye called the macula which is responsible for providing our central vision. People who have the disease can still see, peripherally, but have difficulty seeing objects straight on. It rarely, though, produces complete blindness.

There are two forms of the disease known as "wet" and "dry." The wet form is associated with new blood vessels that grow beneath the retina and leak blood or other fluid which can damage retinal cells. The dry form is more common and results from the aging or thinning of macular tissues.

Dry AMD is more common than the wet form and may eventually progress to a more damaging condition when the retinal cells gradually degrade. Both forms can lead to vision loss, however, so it is advisable to get yearly eye exams to detect early signs of the disease.

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## Prevention & Treatment

There is no cure, presently, for macular degeneration though some drugs may help delay the progression of the condition. Lucentis is an FDA-approved drug that may help in preserving a patient's remaining vision and Avastin has shown promise in early studies. Avastin, however, is an FDA-approved cancer drug and not approved for macular degeneration. There are other investigational drugs and treatments, such as radiation (for wet macular degeneration), laser surgery, artificial retinas, and gene therapies that have good expectations. In addition, researchers are conducting studies aimed at producing encoded genes, changing the processes that cause the disease.

Testing for macular degeneration is simple. The Amsler Grid test is effective in showing the health of the macula. If you are diagnosed with low vision, you may be prescribed special eyewear, magnifiers and other adaptive equipment. Low vision services can help you remain independent.

Sources: National Institute on Aging, U.S. National Library of Medicine

## Common Risk Factors For Macular Degeneration



- **Aging Process**  
The prevalence increases to 30% in patients 75 to 85 years of age.
- **Smoking**  
Studies show a significant association between smoking and macular degeneration. Research also shows that people who live with a smoker double their risks for developing it.
- **Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)**  
A European study reported results in 2003 that those who have high blood pressure may have an increased risk for developing macular degeneration.
- **Obesity**  
Being overweight may play a role in developing advanced forms of the disease.
- **Sides Effects from Drugs**  
Some forms of medication for anti-psychotic conditions have side-effects that may induce macular degeneration.
- **White, Female**  
The condition is more prevalent in this population.



Foods that may act to slow the progression of age-related macular degeneration are those rich in antioxidants such as lutein, omega-3 fatty acids, beta carotene, vitamin C and E, and zinc.

### Fruits recommended:

Strawberries, blueberries, oranges, papaya, cantaloupe, and tomatoes

### Vegetables suggested:

Broccoli, collard greens, asparagus, spinach, sweet potatoes, and carrots

## Bethany HomeHealth Can Help

The Bethany HomeHealth occupational therapists help patients manage the challenges of living with low vision by:

- Teaching the patient how to complete tasks with their remaining vision as efficiently as possible.
- Recommending adaptive techniques for daily activities.
- Modifying activities so that they can be done with less vision.
- Providing information regarding equipment to adapt and compensate for vision loss.
- Reducing the risk of falls, poisoning, burns, severe cuts, or excessive bleeding.
- Improving an individual's psychological well being by helping reduce feelings of frustration.

We accept referrals for our Low/Impaired Vision Enrichment Program from:

- Ophthalmologists
- Optometrists
- Neuro-Ophthalmologists
- Retinal Specialists
- Family Practitioners
- Internists

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