



PRESS RELEASE

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Be eye health aware this Macular Awareness Week

THIS Macular Awareness Week (June 24-30), Specsavers is educating the nation on age-related macular degeneration ('AMD') – a condition that affects more than 600,000 people and is one of the biggest causes of sight loss in the UK¹.

AMD affects the central part of your vision and usually affects both eyes. Vision may become blurry or distorted and gaps or dark spots may appear. As AMD progresses, your ability to see clearly will reduce and this can make everyday activities like reading, driving, watching TV and recognising faces a challenge.

As the name suggests, AMD is more prevalent with age with those aged 50 plus more at risk. Around one in every 200 people has AMD at 60 and by the age of 90, it affects one person in five¹

Specsavers clinical spokesperson, Dr Nigel Best, says: AMD can occur gradually over several years ("dry AMD"), or quickly over a few weeks or months ("wet AMD"). Its exact cause is still unknown but there are several risk factors associated with the condition that include smoking, high blood pressure, being overweight and having family members with the disease.'

'As with any health condition, being aware and taking preventative measures to care for your eye health is the most important step anyone can take to protect their vision, today and for the longer term.'

¹ <https://www.macularsociety.org/age-related-macular-degeneration>

Here, Dr Nigel Best provides further insight into AMD, explaining the different types and the diagnostic innovation that helps detect its early onset:

1. Dry AMD is caused by the gradual break down of light-sensitive cells in the centre of the retina (macula) over several years affecting your ability to see fine details. Symptoms associated with dry AMD include gaps or dark spots in your central vision, words disappearing when reading and objects seeming distorted. Bright light can also feel uncomfortable when transitioning from a darker environment into a lighter one.
2. Unfortunately there is not currently a treatment for dry AMD. At Specsavers, our optometrists will monitor the condition and provide advice on how to maximise your remaining vision and what you can do to slow its progress. If necessary, they can refer patients into the Hospital Eye Service for further assessments.
3. Wet AMD is caused by the growth of blood vessels underneath the macula, which can leak or cause scarring. With Wet AMD, there is a sudden and sometimes dramatic decline in your central vision, usually in one eye. Typically, wet AMD develops in people who have already had dry AMD. If you experience unusual symptoms, such as straight lines appearing to be wavy or blurring of the central vision, seek immediate assistance from an optometrist as soon as possible. Early treatment for wet AMD is essential to help prevent vision from deteriorating even further. If your optometrist suspects you have wet AMD, you will be referred to hospital directly for treatment
4. The most important step to ensure early diagnosis is having a regular eye test. At Specsavers, your optometrist will also be able to advise on adjustments you can make to your lifestyle to lower your risk of macular degeneration, such as stopping smoking or taking nutritional supplements to slow the progression of the condition
5. When checking for AMD, an optometrist might instil eye drops to dilate the pupils so they can view the back of the eye more clearly. Some of our stores also have hospital grade imaging equipment - Optical Coherence Tomography ('OCT'). OCT produces a scan to help us to view the health of your eyes in greater detail, by allowing us to see what's going on beneath the surface of the eye. It works in a similar way to MRI and ultrasound scans, using light waves to produce a 3D image

of your eye. It enables us to examine the structures of the eyes in more detail than ever before including layers that would not normally be visible using traditional methods.

Specsavers recommends everyone should get an eye test once every two years and those over 55 should get their hearing checked once a year. For further information or to book an appointment visit: <https://www.specsavers.co.uk/>

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