

Macular degeneration: checking your vision at home

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In short

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects the macula, the part of the retina you use for reading, driving and seeing faces. Checking your vision at home with an Amsler grid helps you notice a change early. If anything on the grid looks new or different, call us the same day.

What macular degeneration is

AMD damages the cells in the centre of the retina, at the back of the eye. It can blur or distort your central vision, while your side vision is usually kept.

- **Dry AMD** is the most common type. It develops slowly and causes gradual change.
- **Wet AMD** happens when abnormal blood vessels grow under the macula and leak. It can change vision quickly, and it can develop even if you have been told you have dry AMD.

Early AMD often causes no symptoms, which is why regular eye examinations, including a check of the macula, matter.

How to use an Amsler grid

An Amsler grid is a square of straight lines with a dot in the centre. Keep it somewhere you will see it, such as on the fridge.

1

Put on your reading glasses

if you use them.

2 Hold the grid at your normal reading distance

, about 30cm away, in a well-lit room.

3 Cover one eye

with your hand.

4 Look at the centre dot

with your uncovered eye. Keep looking at the dot, and notice the lines around it.

5 Repeat with the other eye.

Check each eye on its own, because a good eye can hide a change in the other one.

Look for lines that are wavy, broken or bent, and for areas that are blurred, dark or missing. If you already have AMD, compare with what you usually see. Is it more blurred, more wavy, or is a missing area larger than before?

How often to check

- **If you have been diagnosed with AMD**, check every day.
- **If you are over 50**, Macular Disease Foundation Australia recommends checking once a week.

A free magnetic grid can be ordered from Macular Disease Foundation Australia at mdfoundation.com.au. The grid does not replace your eye examinations. Keep every review visit.

What a change means

A new change on the grid, or a sudden change in your vision, can be a sign of wet AMD. Wet AMD needs prompt treatment, so call us the same day, even if you already have a visit booked.

If treatment is needed, you are referred to an ophthalmologist. Wet AMD is treated with injections of a medicine into the eye, usually monthly at first and then less often.

Looking after your eyes

- If you smoke, get support to stop.
- Eat plenty of dark green leafy vegetables, and fish, especially oily fish.
- Keep to a healthy weight and exercise regularly.
- Ask your optometrist before starting an eye vitamin supplement.
- AMD runs in families. Encourage your relatives to have regular eye tests.

At your visits we take digital retinal images, so the back of your eye can be compared from one visit to the next. Eye tests are bulk billed for Medicare-eligible patients. See [eye tests](#).

Call us today on (03) 9702 9118 if

- Lines on your grid look wavy, bent or broken when they did not before
- There is a new blurred, dark or missing patch, or a patch has grown
- Reading, or seeing faces, has become harder
- You notice any sudden change in your central vision

[Call \(03\) 9702 9118](#)

⚠ Go to the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital emergency department (32 Gisborne Street, East Melbourne, open 24 hours), or call 000, if

you have a sudden loss of vision or severe eye pain.

To book a review or an eye test, [book online](#) or call us on [\(03\) 9702 9118](#).

FAQs

— How often should I use an Amsler grid?

Every day if you have been diagnosed with AMD. Once a week if you are over 50, as

Macular Disease Foundation Australia recommends.

— **What should I do if the lines on the grid look wavy?**

Call us the same day on (03) 9702 9118. A new change can be a sign of wet AMD, which needs prompt treatment.

— **Can dry macular degeneration turn into wet?**

Yes. Wet AMD can develop in someone already told they have dry AMD, which is why daily checks with the grid matter.

— **Does the Amsler grid replace eye examinations?**

No. The grid helps you notice a change between visits. Only an eye examination, including a check of the macula, can find and track AMD.
