



Macular Degeneration

Patient Information Sheet

North Yorkshire Local Optometric Committee

Age-related macular degeneration

Many people in the UK are affected by this visual impairment.

What causes it?

As you get older, the circulation in your eyes can become poor and lead to a build-up of waste products in the macular region of the retina.

The result of this build-up is that your eyes will not work as well as they once did.

What is the macular region of the retina?

The retina is at the back of the eye. Pictures of things it sees are sent to the brain.

The macula is a special part of the retina, which picks up the fine detail.

How does macular degeneration affect sight?

- Things you see may be blurred, especially in the centre. This might make it difficult to read bus numbers or recognise people's faces.
- Straight lines may look curved.
- You may notice blank areas when looking at the TV or reading.

Is this the start of blindness?

The macula is the part of the eye that sees detail, so fine vision will be affected. However, the rest of your vision will be unaffected.

Is there a cure?

For most people who get this condition, the answer is no.

However, some people have the same symptoms of macular degeneration but for a different reason. They have leaking or swelling blood vessels in the macula. Different forms of laser treatment may help them.

Can I be helped to see better?

Your GP or optometrist can refer you to the Low Vision Clinic at the hospital, which offers a choice of magnifying aids.

Low-vision aids

Many optometrists have some low-vision aids you could buy.

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