



PRESS RELEASE

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Photo Attached



In Focus: Age-Related Macular Degeneration

(Honolulu, Hawaii), February 19, 2014 – Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects over 2 million Americans and is the leading cause of severe vision loss for those 60 years of age and older. AMD develops as a person ages and can greatly diminish central vision. It's important for those at risk to know the symptoms and get regular eye exams from their eye care professional.

“AMD is a progressive, usually painless eye disease that causes central vision to blur while peripheral vision is unaffected,” said Dr. Christopher Tortora, M.D., medical director of the Hawaiian Eye Center and Dry Eye Clinic. “As with many other eye diseases, AMD develops slowly and symptoms often go unnoticed until significant vision loss has already taken place.”

AMD occurs when the eye’s macula starts to deteriorate, affecting central vision that allows a person to see straight ahead and distinguish fine details. The macula is the small, central portion of the retina — the light-sensitive tissue lining the back of the eye.

There are two forms of AMD: dry and wet. The dry form is the most common and is a result of drusen, white or yellow fatty protein deposits, in the macula. As drusen grow and multiply, vision becomes dimmed or distorted. In advanced stages, the macula becomes thinner and can lead to blind spots or complete loss of central vision.

The wet form of AMD is far less common but advances much more rapidly. Abnormal blood vessels grow underneath the macula and leak blood and fluid into the retina. The abnormal blood vessels eventually scar and cause permanent loss of central vision. In some cases, dry AMD can turn into wet AMD.

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Symptoms of AMD include dark, blurry spots in the center of vision and a decrease in the brightness of colors. Wet form symptoms will appear and advance quickly, while dry form symptoms tend to go unnoticed until later stages of AMD.

Risk factors for AMD include:

- Being over the age of 60
- Smoking
- Obesity
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Being of Caucasian descent
- Family history of the disease

Early detection of AMD is crucial in preserving vision. Those 50 and older should get a comprehensive dilated eye exam from an eye care professional every two years to check for AMD and other eye diseases. Those 60 and over or those diagnosed with diabetes should get checked once a year. If early AMD is detected, more frequent eye exams may be needed to see if the disease is progressing.

There is currently no treatment for early AMD and no cure for the dry form. However, the National Eye Institute did extensive studies that showed high doses of certain vitamins and minerals including vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc, copper, lutein and zeaxanthin can help to slow the progression for those with intermediate or late AMD. Nutritional supplements based on these studies are available from a number of manufacturers and may be referred to as AREDS or AREDS2 (Age-Related Eye Disease Studies).

Wet AMD can be treated with variety of procedures that help to close off broken blood vessels and slow the growth of new abnormal blood vessels. Treatments include injecting drugs directly into the eye or via the arm with an accompanying laser beam to the eye that activates the drug (photodynamic therapy). Laser surgery, which differs from photodynamic therapy, is used far less often and involves aiming a high-energy beam that burns the abnormal blood vessels.

No treatment for AMD is guaranteed, and the disease may still progress or reoccur.

The best way to help prevent AMD or limit its effects is to exercise regularly, eat a healthy, balanced diet and not smoke. Foods like citrus fruits, fish, nuts and green, leafy vegetables are highly recommended.

It's important to speak with an eye care professional about treatment options and risks.

Dr. Christopher Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of "The Hawaiian Eye Show," a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision broadcast live every Saturday at 8 a.m. on KHVH 830 AM/rebroadcast at 9 p.m. on KHBZ 990 AM. He and his colleagues at the Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventative eye care. To learn more about a variety of eye health issues, please call the Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8448 or visit www.HawaiianEye.com and [www.Facebook.com/HawaiianEyeCenter](https://www.facebook.com/HawaiianEyeCenter), where "life has never looked better."

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