

PRESS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release



Age-Related Macular Degeneration: Leading Cause of Blindness in Seniors

(Wahiawa, Hawaii) February 7, 2018 – Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) affects more than 2 million Americans and is the leading cause of severe vision loss for those 50 years and older. It is a progressive and usually painless eye disease that occurs when the eye’s macula starts to deteriorate, diminishing central vision. The macula is the small central portion of the retina, or the light-sensitive tissue lining the back of the eye. [The American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) designates February AMD Awareness Month to shed light on this not so well-known disease.

“AMD develops slowly over time with symptoms often going unnoticed until significant damage has already occurred,” said Christopher Tortora, M.D., Medical Director of [Hawaiian Eye Center](#). “It causes central vision to blur while peripheral vision is unaffected. Central vision is necessary to see straight ahead and distinguish fine details.”

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

Wet 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. Symptoms of AMD include dark, blurry spots in the center of vision and a decrease in the brightness of colors.

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Early detection is important to preserve eyesight. Those 50 and older should get a comprehensive dilated eye exam from an eye doctor every two to three years to check for AMD and other eye diseases. If early AMD is detected, more frequent eye exams may be needed to see if the disease is progressing.

Risk factors for AMD include: being 50 and older, smoking, obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol and a family history of the disease. Caucasians and women are also more likely to develop AMD. The best way to help prevent AMD or limit its effects is to exercise regularly, maintain a healthy diet and not smoke.

Currently, there's no treatment for early AMD and no cure for the dry form. [Nutritional supplements](#) based on extensive studies conducted by the National Eye Institute are available from a number of manufacturers and may be referred to as AREDS or AREDS2 (Age-Related Eye Disease Studies). The supplements consists of high doses of certain vitamins and minerals (vitmain C, vitamin E, zinc, copper, lutein and zeaxanthin) that help to slow the progression for those with intermediate or late AMD.

Wet AMD can be treated with a variety of procedures that help to close off broken blood vessels and slow the growth of new, abnormal blood vessels. Treatments can be helpful in stabilizing vision loss.

“Even with treatment, AMD may still progress or reoccur,” Dr. Tortora said. “It’s important to speak with an eye care professional about treatment options and risks.”

Christopher Tortora, M.D., and his colleague Steven Rhee, D.O., are board-certified ophthalmologists at Hawaiian Eye Center. Dr. Tortora and Dr. Rhee also host “The Hawaiian Eye Show,” a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision broadcast live every Saturday at 8 a.m. on KHVH 830 AM. Hawaiian Eye’s dedicated doctors and support staff 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 621-8448 or visit HawaiianEye.com. “For over 40 years, life has never looked better.”

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