Prevention Tips

There is no known way to prevent age-related macular degeneration (AMD), although certain vitamin/mineral combinations can slow progress of intermediate or early advanced AMD. If you are at high risk for developing advanced AMD—that is, you have intermediate AMD or advanced AMD in one eye (wet or dry)—talk to your health care professional about taking high doses of vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, zinc and copper. Certain combinations of supplements were shown in one major study to reduce risk of developing advanced stages of AMD, but smokers should not take this combination of supplements. All patients should consult their personal physician about all vitamin usage. Another study found that consuming antioxidant-rich foods like pecans, blueberries and artichokes could extend the lifetime of crucial retinal cells and disrupt two processes in the retina that contribute to macular degeneration. Omega-3 fatty acids, such as from oily fish, also may be helpful.

Your best bet for protecting your eyesight is getting regular, comprehensive eye examinations. If you are diagnosed with dry AMD, the National Eye Institute recommends a dilated pupil eye exam at least once a year. And, because dry AMD can progress to wet AMD, if you have dry AMD, you might want to discuss with your health care professional whether you should use an Amsler grid to check each eye regularly for signs of wet AMD. If you detect changes, contact your health care professional for an eye exam.

If you are diagnosed with wet AMD and your health care professional recommends laser surgery or photodynamic therapy, don't delay the procedure. If you do, the disease may progress to the point where treatment to try to slow its progression and protect remaining sight may not be an option. Ask your health care professional which other steps you should take to evaluate and preserve your vision, particularly in the arena of vitamin/mineral supplements and omega-3 fatty acids.

Your lifestyle can play a role in reducing your risk of developing AMD:

- Eat a healthy diet high in green, leafy vegetables and fish.
- Do not smoke.
- Maintain normal blood pressure.
- Watch your weight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Maintain healthy cholesterol levels.

Want to learn more about macular degeneration? Visit www.HealthyWomen.org