

Age Related Macular Degeneration The Foods you Eat and Taking Vitamin Supplements

Understanding Age Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD)

The *retina* sits behind the eyeball, and the *macula* is an area of the retina. As some people age, the layer of cells beneath the retina begins to thin, and spots called *drusen* appear on the macula. Build-up of drusen on the macula can affect vision. Two signs of drusen buildup are a decline in a person's ability to see fine print, or things known to have straight lines, start to appear wavy.

There is no cure for Age Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD). It is possible to slow the advance of the disease in the intermediate to advanced stages, by changing your diet, and taking supplements appropriate for the condition. Never take any supplements without consulting with your eye doctor for the correct dosage.

Increase Certain Foods in Your Diet

Like our mothers and grandmothers always say: Eat your fruits and vegetables! Foods rich in vitamins C, E, beta-carotene, zinc and copper can slow down the advance of ARMD. Also, it pays to eat fish more than once a week. The following is a list of foods containing beneficial nutrients.

- fish high in omega 3 fatty acid twice per week
- fruits
- peas
- dark green leafy vegetables, such as kale, spinach, broccoli, collard greens, mustard greens

Avoid Eating Certain Foods

Not only can good foods help slow down the advance of ARMD, but there is a link between bad diet and developing ARMD in the first place. Many snack and junk foods contain linoleic acid, polyunsaturated and vegetable fats. A diet high in these foods *doubles* the risk of developing AMD. Examples of these foods are:

- cakes, cookies, foods sweetened with sugar or corn syrup
- cheese pizza
- white bread

Taking Vitamin Supplements for ARMD

Yes, take supplements under your eye doctor's direction, but you can't expect supplements to save your eyesight if you are also eating a poor diet. Talk to your eye doctor about treating it with dietary changes and supplements. The following chart provides Supplement Dosage as recommended in the Age Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS), conducted by the National Eye Institute in 2001.

Supplement Dosage Chart for ARMD

Nutrient	AREDS recommended amount
Vitamin C	500 milligrams
Vitamin E	400 International Units
Beta-carotene	15 milligrams (often labeled as equivalent to 25,000 International Units of vitamin A)
Zinc	80 milligrams as zinc oxide
Copper	2 milligrams as cupric oxide

Although people who have diets rich in green leafy vegetables have a lower risk of developing AMD, the high levels of vitamins and minerals in a supplement formulated for eye health, are hard to reach in diet alone. A daily multivitamin may not have the amounts required to address AMD, so a supplement should be taken.

Relevant Studies

- *The Netherlands Study* reported that people who ingested higher amounts of vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, and zinc had a 35% reduced risk of ARMD compared to those who ingested lower than the median
- *Harvard Medical School* conducted a study, and found that people who ate antioxidant rich greens had a 40% lower risk of ARMD than those eating few of these vegetables
- *The National Eye Institute* conducted the Age Related Eye Disease Study in 2001, and found that people at high risk of developing advanced stages of ARMD, lowered their risk by about 25 % when treated with a high-dose combination of vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, and zinc.

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