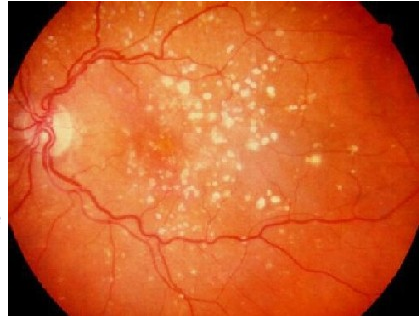


February 2010

February is Age Related

Macular Degeneration Month

Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of vision loss in people aged 55 and older and affects more than 10 million Americans. Only 30 percent of Americans are familiar with the disease, according to a study by AMD Alliance International.



There are two forms of AMD: "dry" and "wet." Dry AMD is the most common form of the disease and approximately 90 percent of AMD patients have this type. Approximately 10 to 20 percent of dry AMD cases will progress to wet AMD.

Wet AMD occurs when fragile, abnormal blood vessels are formed under the macula and begin to leak fluid and blood. Scar tissue develops and destroys the macula, which leads to vision loss. *Studies show that without treatment, those diagnosed with "wet" AMD will become functionally blind within two years.*

The treatments available today provide a much better chance of arresting vision loss. In some cases, if caught in a timely manner, reversing some vision loss is possible. We urge patients over age 55 to get checked for macular degeneration with an eye examination utilizing dilating eye drops. Risk factors for AMD include smoking, family history, cardiovascular disease including elevated cholesterol and hypertension, ethnicity (caucasians are most affected) and high exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light.