

Drusen and early age-related macular degeneration

What are drusen?

Drusen are yellowish deposits that form under the retina as we get older. They are very common in older people and do not affect your sight. Most people with drusen have normal or near normal vision. If you have lots of drusen it may be called early (dry) age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The number, size and location of the drusen will affect how likely it is that your vision may become affected at a later stage. Your optometrist may use a photograph or scan of your retina to monitor drusen and early AMD.

Will drusen affect my sight?

Most people with drusen or early AMD have normal or near normal vision. However, early AMD may develop into late AMD, which will affect your ability to see central detail, for example to read or recognise faces.

It is normal for older people to have some small drusen. The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence states that people with medium sized drusen are at a low risk of progressing to sight loss, and those with large drusen are at a medium risk of progressing to sight loss. Your optometrist will be able to tell you how this applies to you.

Contact your optometrist if you notice any changes in your vision, particularly if these are sudden.



Most people with drusen or early AMD have normal, or near normal vision.

Can I do anything about drusen or early AMD?

Here are the main things you can do to protect your eyes.

1. Don't smoke.
2. Eat a good, balanced diet, with plenty of coloured fruit and vegetables.
3. Maintain a healthy weight and blood pressure.
4. Be aware of your vision in each eye separately (with glasses if you need them) and check this regularly. Look for distortion or blurring, or any blank patches. You can do this by looking at things with straight lines, such as door or window frames or Venetian blinds. You can also use a piece of graph paper or an Amsler grid, which your optometrist will be able to give you to use at home. If you notice any changes, contact your optometrist.
5. Protecting your eyes from the sun may help protect your macula.

The College is the professional body for optometry. It qualifies the profession and delivers the guidance and development to ensure optometrists provide the best possible care. Our members use MCOptom or FCOptom after their name. Membership of the College shows their commitment to the very highest clinical, ethical and professional standards. Look for the letters MCOptom or FCOptom to see if your optometrist is a member.

Visit [lookafteryoureyes.org](https://www.lookafteryoureyes.org) for more information

All our fact sheets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence and are regularly reviewed and updated. This fact sheet contains general information. It is always best to raise any specific concerns you may have with your optometrist.

