Bascom Palmer Eye Institute
Vitamins for Macular Degeneration
Vitamins for Macular Degeneration

Your ophthalmologist has diagnosed you with age-related macular degeneration, and has recommended that you begin vitamin supplementation. These vitamins should be combined with a balanced diet (including green, leafy vegetables) and a healthy, non-smoking lifestyle.

These vitamins are intended to reduce the risk of losing vision in the future from this disease. This treatment is not intended to improve your current vision.

This vitamin recommendation is based on the results of the Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS), which were published in 2001. This was a major clinical trial sponsored by the National Eye Institute, one of the federal government’s National Institutes of Health.

Several companies currently manufacture the specific vitamin combination used in this study and more may be forthcoming into the marketplace. All of these preparations include the word AREDS on the bottle.

What is the dosage of the AREDS formulation?
The specific daily amounts of antioxidants and zinc used by the study researchers were:
• 500 milligrams of vitamin C
• 400 International Units of vitamin E
• 15 milligrams of beta-carotene (often labeled as equivalent to 25,000 International Units of vitamin A)
• 80 milligrams of zinc as zinc oxide; and
• 2 milligrams of copper as cupric oxide. Copper was added to the AREDS formulations containing zinc to prevent copper deficiency anemia, a condition associated with high levels of zinc intake.

If you have any questions regarding these vitamins, please speak with your ophthalmologist.
Can I take a daily multivitamin if I am taking the AREDS formulation?
Yes. A daily multivitamin contains many important nutrients not found in the AREDS formulation. The AREDS formulation is not a substitute for a multivitamin. If you are already taking daily multivitamins, be sure to review all your vitamins with your ophthalmologist before you begin.

Can a daily multivitamin alone provide the same high levels of antioxidants and zinc as the AREDS formulation?
No. The AREDS formulation’s levels of antioxidants and zinc are considerably higher than the amounts in any daily multivitamin.

Where can I buy the AREDS formulation?
You can purchase the AREDS formulation at drug stores, supermarkets, health food stores, and other retail outlets that sell pharmaceutical products. The vitamins and minerals can also be purchased separately; be certain to include copper whenever taking high levels of zinc. Taking beta-carotene is not recommended for smokers.

What if I currently smoke or recently stopped?
In general, current or former smokers should not use these vitamins because they contain beta-carotene, which may increase the risk of lung cancer in smokers. (If you stopped smoking more than 10 years ago, your risk of lung cancer should be lower.)

If you currently smoke, we recommend that you stop smoking. If you cannot, or if you only recently stopped smoking, then another vitamin preparation may be beneficial, although there is less scientific evidence. Look for vitamin preparations that do not include beta-carotene, but have lutein instead.

Eat your vegetables!
Previous studies have suggested that people who have diets rich in green, leafy vegetables have a lower risk of developing AMD.
Is there a way to test my vision?
The Amsler Grid is used to test your vision. Once a week, check your eyes, one eye at a time, using this grid. Attach it to your bathroom mirror, refrigerator, or another convenient location.

Stand 14 inches from the grid and cover one eye, then focus on the dot in the center of the grid and ask yourself:

- Am I able to see the corners and sides of the square?
- Do I see any wavy lines?
- Are there any holes or missing areas?

If the lines of the grid do not look straight or appear to be missing and or distorted, contact your retinal specialist.

To schedule an appointment with a Bascom Palmer macular degeneration specialist or other ophthalmologist, please call: 1-888-845-0002.

Appointments may also be requested online at: www.bascompalmer.org

Bascom Palmer Eye Institute’s Emergency Department in Miami is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
Bascom Palmer Eye Institute
(800) 329-7000
www.bascompalmer.org

Miami
900 N.W. 17th Street, Miami, FL 33136
(305) 326-6000

Palm Beach Gardens
7101 Fairway Drive, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418
(561) 515-1500

Naples
311 9th Street North, Naples, FL 34102
(239) 659-3937

Plantation
1000 South Pine Island Road, Plantation, FL 33324
(954) 465-2700