

# Age Related Macular Degeneration [ARMD]

## Main risk factors for progression / worsening of ARMD:-

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Being overweight or obese
- High intake of animal / vegetable fat
- Female gender
- Caucasian race
- Having a family history of ARMD
- Being longsighted

## Things that you can do which may help:-

- **Stop smoking** - reduces risk of later ARMD 30%
- **Eat a balanced diet** - include green vegetables / fruit and fish (omega 3) and try to reduce your intake of animal and vegetable fats.
- **Watch your weight**
- **Exercise**
- **Maintain your blood pressure**
- **Dietary supplementation** - see below and your pharmacist:

### A. Vitamins and Trace elements

The AREDS 1 and 2 [Age Related Eye Disease Study] studies suggest that certain persons with ARMD may benefit from dietary supplementation.

AREDS have shown that dietary supplementation can reduce the risk of developing advanced ARMD and visual loss by about 20% at 6 years in persons older than 55 years with; extensive intermediate size drusen, at least 1 large drusen, non-central geographic atrophy in 1 or both eyes, or advanced ARMD or vision loss due to ARMD in 1 eye – your ophthalmologist will tell you whether you meet these criteria.

The supplements used in the initial AREDS 1 study were associated with an increased risk of lung cancer in smokers or former smokers. AREDS 2 showed that this risk was attributed to beta-carotene. The AREDS 2 formulations containing lutein + zeaxanthin and NO beta-carotene are equally effective, and have NOT been shown to be associated with an increased risk of lung cancer. Please note however, that zinc supplements maybe associated with a higher risk of urinary tract problems.

### **AREDS 2 formulation supplements are available and contain:**

500mg vitamin C, 400iu vitamin E, 10mg lutein, 2mg zeaxanthin, 80mg zinc, 2mg copper

### B. Lutein / Zeaxanthin (see AREDS above)

AREDS 2 suggested that lutein + zeaxanthin supplements reduce the risk of developing ARMD and improve visual function and unlike beta-carotene are not associated with an increased risk of lung cancer in smokers or former smokers.

### C. Omega-3 fatty acids

There is some evidence to suggest that a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of developing exudative (wet) ARMD but this was not supported by AREDS 2.

Please note that this information is provided to help you to make your own decision as to whether or not you wish to take any dietary supplements.

**The author has no proprietary interest in any ocular supplement**