Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

March is Age-related Macular Degeneration/Low Vision Awareness Month and the eyecare providers at the Penn State Hershey Eye Center want everyone to be aware of the following facts:

- Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of visual impairment for individuals age 50 and older.
- As the baby boomers age, the number of people with AMD and serious visual impairment will increase dramatically.
- Those at risk for AMD - individuals who are age 50 and older, hypertensive, who smoke, or have a family history of AMD - should see an eyecare provider for a complete eye exam every one to two years. An eye exam will ensure AMD and other eye conditions that threaten vision are detected and treated early.
- Laser treatments can sometimes treat the “wet” form of macular degeneration (the rarer, but more severe form).
- Vitamin and mineral supplements such as zinc and antioxidants can slow the progression of the “dry” form (the most common form) of AMD in some people.
- Laser and photodynamic therapy can reduce the risk of moderate to severe vision loss in patients with specific forms of “wet” macular degeneration.
- Other treatments include intraocular injections of antineovascular drugs.
- People should investigate claims of “miracle treatments” carefully and talk to their eyecare provider before undergoing such treatments.

Source: American Academy of Ophthalmology

Please call 717-531-5690 to schedule an eye exam at the Penn State Hershey Eye Center.
Low Vision Rehabilitation

“Vision rehabilitation can be a wonderful way to make the most of a person’s remaining vision. Those who are capable, motivated, and possess a positive attitude will be the most successful,” states Dr. Marianne Boltz, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology and low vision specialist at the Penn State Hershey Eye Center.

The amount of rehabilitation needed depends on your vision loss and what you want to be able to do. Many low-vision aids/devices are available to assist with everyday tasks and your favorite leisurely activities.

It is very important to talk with your eyecare provider before purchasing any of these aids so that she/he can help you determine what will best meet your needs. Use of any of these devices requires training and practice. Your eyecare provider may recommend involving a team of professionals to determine the amount and type of rehabilitation needed to help you adjust to your vision loss. Ask your eyecare provider about the wide range of services and assistance available through the following agencies:

- Tri-County Association for the Blind
- PA Blindness & Visual Services Department
- Pennsylvania Council of the Blind
- Pennsylvania Association for the Blind

Source: American Academy of Ophthalmology and National Eye Institute

Did you know?

Your pet may need an ophthalmologist, a veterinarian ophthalmologist that is! Animals develop many of the same eye conditions and diseases as humans, e.g., retinal detachment, glaucoma, cataract, and dry eye. Veterinarians must complete a 3-year residency in veterinary ophthalmology just as ophthalmologists for humans do.

Eye Care Research

Penn State Department of Ophthalmology researchers are using novel visual function measurements to diagnose, monitor and evaluate potential new treatments for age-related macular degeneration. Dr. Gregory Jackson, Associate Professor, has invented a new diagnostic test for AMD based upon the measurement of night vision impairment which is an early symptom of the disease. His current research is focused on using the assessment of night vision to elucidate the mechanisms responsible for AMD and to evaluate the efficacy of new treatments in upcoming phase 1 and phase 2 clinical trials. Dr. Ingrid Scott, Professor, conducts AMD clinical trials including nutritional interventions and home-based monitoring of disease progression.