

What you need to know about wet macular degeneration

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Millions of people deal with age-related macular degeneration as they get older, but many don't understand the difference between types of the condition or what they can do to lessen the effects. Dr. Sophie Bakri, a Mayo Clinic ophthalmologist and retina specialist, explains the differences between wet macular degeneration and dry macular degeneration.

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You're getting older and notice you're not seeing as well. You try out readers, but everything just seems blurry. And straight lines seem wavy.

It could be age-related macular degeneration.

"The macula is the center of the retina," Bakri says. "The retina is the camera of the eye that receives the light impulses and processes them, and the macula is responsible for the really fine visual acuity, the right precise vision."

Bakri says there are two kinds of macular degeneration: wet and dry.

"The dry kind usually comes on first, and when we look in the retina of the dry kind, we see those little rocklike deposits under the retina," she explains. "Sometimes we see areas of atrophy where the cells are not present or not really working as well."

For dry macular degeneration, there are over-the-counter vitamins that can help, but mostly Bakri says a Mediterranean diet and exercise are the best things you can do for symptoms.

"The wet type is usually in the later stages when a blood vessel has grown under the retina and is leaking blood or fluid. And the No. 1 goal is to shut down that blood vessel to prevent it bleeding even more and to prevent patients losing more vision."

Bakri says that for wet macular degeneration, you'll likely need to see a retina specialist for a treatment plan that includes regular eye injections.

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