

Patient information factsheet

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) virtual clinic with treatment

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about our virtual clinic and treatment for wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD). It explains what wet AMD is, how it is treated and what you can expect at your AMD virtual clinic appointments. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

What is wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD)?

Wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a long-term condition that affects the macula (the part of the eye that is responsible for all of our central vision, most of our colour vision and the fine detail of what we see). The macula is in the centre of the retina (a thin layer of light sensitive tissue that lies at the back of the eye). Wet AMD is caused by the growth of abnormal blood vessels at the macula. These vessels leak blood and fluid, which causes scarring of the macula and can affect your central vision (the middle part of your vision).

Wet AMD can affect both eyes and can make things like reading, watching TV, driving or recognising faces difficult. Wet AMD can develop very suddenly (over a few weeks or months), but it can be treated if it is caught early.

How is wet AMD treated?

Wet AMD is treated with regular eye injections that contain anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (anti-VEGF) drugs. VEGF is a chemical in the body that develops healthy blood vessels. If you have wet AMD, your eye produces too much VEGF which causes unwanted, unhealthy blood vessels to grow. These injections block the production of VEGF.

The injections are usually very effective at treating the condition, but we will need to give them on a regular basis for as long as necessary to try and maintain the central vision.

At UHS, we treat wet AMD with regular injections to try to help preserve your vision. We will slowly increase the interval between injections if your wet AMD appears stable.

What is the AMD virtual clinic?

For most people, we can safely review your condition by looking at your retinal (macular) scan and your visual acuity results (how well you can see). This means that you will have to attend the hospital for the vision test and scans, but you won't need to see a doctor in person at these visits. This is why we call them 'AMD virtual clinic appointments'.

You will still have a face-to-face clinic appointment with a medical retina specialist every six to eight months.

Patient information factsheet

What should I expect at my AMD virtual clinic appointment?

During your appointment, we will:

- test your vision (visual acuity)
- put dilating drops into your eyes (to enlarge your pupils)
- perform a scan of the macula
- direct you to the injection suites, where you will receive your usual injection

Your scan results and visual acuity will be reviewed by a member of our medical retina team. We will send you a letter with your results. It will confirm whether your AMD has remained stable or if it has become active, and what to expect at your next appointment.

If your wet AMD is stable

- We will book you back into our AMD virtual clinic (for a scan and eye injection) after a longer interval than the previous one, to try and safely extend the time between your injections.

If your wet AMD is active

- If the activity in your eye is mild, we will book you back into our AMD virtual clinic (for a scan and eye injection) after a shorter interval.
- If there is a significant increase in activity, we may book you in for a course of injections before your next review appointment.

Why does the interval between injections need to be increased?

This is a good sign, as it means that your wet AMD is stable. We will gradually increase the time between your injections to see if we can safely wean you off them.

Why does the interval between injections need to be decreased?

This means that your wet AMD is showing signs of activity. To re-establish control of your wet AMD, we may need to give you more frequent injections at shorter intervals.

What can I do to help my eyes?

Stopping smoking is one of the best things you can do to help your vision. Eating a good diet with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables can also help.

What happens if there is a change in my vision?

Please contact our eye casualty department immediately on **023 8120 6592** if you notice a sudden change in your vision between appointments. For example:

- new or worse persistently blurred central vision
- new or worse distorted vision (for example if straight lines, such as a door frame or lines on the Amsler monitoring grid, become kinked)

Please let the scan technician or nurse at your appointment know if you have any of these symptoms, or if you have noticed new or worsening symptoms in the eye we are treating.

Can I drive to my appointment?

Do not drive to your appointment. The eye drops we will give you to dilate (enlarge) your pupils will blur your vision for around four hours. You will not legally be able to drive within this period.

Patient information factsheet

Before your appointment

Please let us know before your appointment if:

- you have recently suffered a stroke, mini-stroke or heart attack
- you are currently taking antibiotics or you have symptoms of an active infection

Depending on your circumstances, we may not be able to give you the anti-VEGF injection. If this is the case, we will discuss this with you.

If you are not able to attend your appointment, please contact us as soon as possible so we can rearrange another date for you.

Contact us

AMD team
Southampton eye unit
Southampton General Hospital
Tremona Road
Southampton
SO16 6YD

Telephone: **023 8120 8467**

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/age-related-macular-degeneration-amd

www.macularsociety.org/wet-amd

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**