

Vitamins and Minerals

Treating Age Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD)

When I was starting to practice retina in 1988, an article was published by Dr. Newsom discussing the effects of dietary Zinc supplement (100mg/day) on Age Related Macular Degeneration. This was one of the first articles to show that we could help our patients better manage ARMD, both wet and dry type, using a mineral supplement. A little more than a decade later the National Institutes of Health published studies confirming the zinc supplements improved patient outcomes, but they also added Lutein to the mix as it provided a "statistically significant positive effect".

What was confusing about the formulation of the first AREDS vitamins was that other ingredients that did not make a difference in outcome at a statistically significant level were still included in the first "AREDS" formula. An ingredient is either statistically significant or not, but the ambiguity of ingredients whose impacts are "close enough" only complicates the study and dilutes the effective ingredients. The initial supplements were not recommend by me as they cut the zinc level too low to allow

inclusion of more of the non-significant ingredients.

Ten years worth of patient exams demonstrated the beneficial effect of a 60-100mg dose of zinc daily on ARMD clinic patients.

Fast forward to today. The new AREDS2 formula establishes the correct zinc level and this is now the proper standard of care.

However, it is interesting to go to the grocery store and look at the labels on vitamins advertising zinc and its benefits. The only brand that actually followed the AREDS2 formula is "Preservision AREDS2". All of the others I have seen have "AREDS2" on the label, but not the right amounts. This is like advertising that you make "chocolate cake" but only put a pinch of chococate in the mix to save money. Many patients try to comply with our advice, only to be thwarted at the grocery store by unclear and deceptive labeling. We now only recommend Preservision AREDS2 to make sure they get the vitamins that will actually give them the benefit they seek and deserve as proven scientifically.

The Keys to Health

Although the exact causes of ARMD are not fully understood, multiple recent scientific study shows that vitamin C, Lutein, omega3 and zinc may reduce the impact of ARMD in some people with the disease. The study showed that among people at high risk for late-stage macular degeneration, these dietary supplements lower the risk of the disease progressing to advanced stages by about 25 to 30%. However, the supplements did not appear to benefit people with minimal ARMD or those who have no evidence of macular degeneration. It also would not help relatives of patients with ARMD. For relatives: take a standard multivitamin a day, do not smoke, do what is heart healthy (check blood pressure, diet, exercise and monitor an Amsler Grid).

P Van Houten

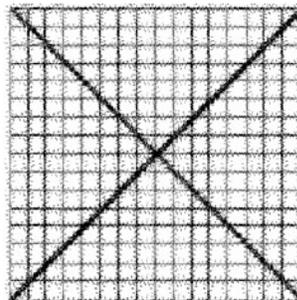
It is a daily commitment to take two tablets a day in order to change the outcome of this problem. If you are getting side effects of any kind, talk to your Doctor and see if the side effect is serious (stop the vitamin) or is something you can deal with.

There may be alternatives to the brand you are taking that may be causing the problem.

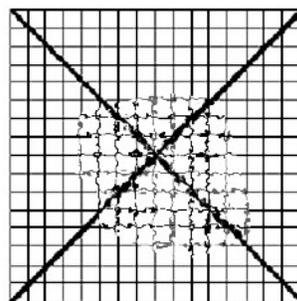
It is very important to remember that vitamin supplements are not a cure for ARMD, nor will they restore vision you may have already lost from the disease. However, specific amounts of certain supplements do play a key role in helping some people at high risk for advanced ARMD to maintain their vision. You should speak with your eye doctor to determine if you are at risk for developing advanced ARMD, and to learn if supplements are recommended for you.

The Zinc, Lutein and more recently Omega 3 recommendations are the minimum to slow the process of ARMD. Other nutrients like Bilberry and others have not reached the 98% confidence in medical studies making them less likely to be helping the problem. Taking vitamins is a little like changing the oil in your car every 3000 to 5000 miles, it does not make the car run faster but it does make it run longer, so, do not think that you will see better

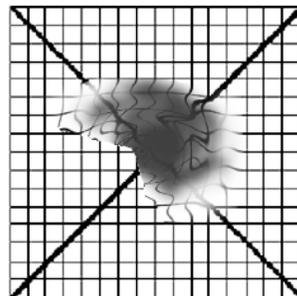
by taking the vitamins. You may last longer with better results if you take them consistently. You should also monitor an Amsler Grid every couple of days by looking at the chart with one eye closed. Stare at the center and notice any distortion or changes in the lines without moving your eye from the center. If there are new changes, call right away and be seen by an eye doctor in a few days, not a few weeks later. New changes are best handled soon as the medications for this work best early. Here are some examples of positive Amsler grids:



OVERALL BLUR



WATERMARK



DARK SPOTS

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Amsler Grid

[Download from ECRetina.com](#)

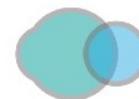


Contributors

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East Carolina Retina
CONSULTANTS