

NOW Health

Digital Health Network

Wet macular degeneration is an eye condition that causes blurred vision or reduced central vision. It is a type of age-related macular degeneration where blood vessels leak fluid or blood into part of the retina known as the macula (MAK-u-luh). The macula is responsible for central vision.

Wet macular degeneration is one of two types of age-related macular degeneration. The other type, dry macular degeneration, is more common and less severe. The wet type always begins as the dry type.

Early detection and treatment of wet macular degeneration may help reduce vision loss. In some instances, early treatment may recover vision.



Mayo Clinic Health Letter & Books

Join thousands of readers who trust Mayo Clinic Health Letter for reliable health tips and insights. Start your journey to better health today.

[Subscribe today](#)

Products & Services

[A Book: Mayo Clinic Guide to Better Vision](#)

Symptoms

Wet macular degeneration symptoms usually appear suddenly and worsen quickly. They may include:

- Visual distortions, such as straight lines that seem to be bent.
- Reduced central vision in one or both eyes.
- The need for brighter light when reading or doing close-up work.
- Difficulty adjusting to low light levels, such as when entering a dimly lit restaurant or theater.
- Increased blurriness of printed words.
- Difficulty recognizing faces.
- A well-defined blurry spot or blind spot in the field of vision.

Macular degeneration doesn't affect side vision, so it doesn't cause total blindness.

When to see a doctor

See your eye care professional if:

- You notice changes in your central vision.
- You lose the ability to see fine detail.

These changes may be the first sign of macular degeneration, particularly if you're older than age 60.

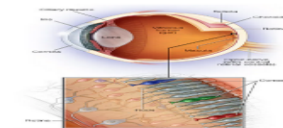
More Information

[Macular degeneration, wet, care at Mayo Clinic](#)

[What are the symptoms of wet age-related macular degeneration?](#)

[Request an appointment](#)

Causes



Parts of the eye
[Enlarge image](#)

No one knows the exact cause of wet macular degeneration, but it develops in people who have dry macular degeneration. Of all people with age-related macular degeneration, about 20% have the wet form.

Wet macular degeneration can develop in different ways:

- **Vision loss caused by irregular blood vessel growth.** Sometimes new blood vessels grow from the choroid under and into the macula. This growth isn't typical, and when it happens it's known as choroidal neovascularization. The choroid is the layer of blood vessels between the retina and the outer, firm coat of the eye, called the sclera. These blood vessels may leak fluid or blood, affecting the retina's function and leading to vision loss.
- **Vision loss caused by fluid buildup in the back of the eye.** When fluid leaks from the choroid, it can collect between the thin cell layer called the retinal pigment epithelium and the retina or within the layers of the retina. This may cause irregularities in the macula layers, resulting in vision loss or distortion.

Risk factors

Factors that may increase the risk of macular degeneration include:

- **Age.** This disease is most common in people over 50.
- **Family history and genetics.** This disease has a hereditary component, meaning it can run in families. Researchers have identified several genes linked to the condition.
- **Race.** Macular degeneration is more common in white people.
- **Smoking.** Smoking cigarettes or being exposed to tobacco smoke on a regular basis greatly increases the risk of macular degeneration.
- **Obesity.** Research suggests that obesity may increase the chance that early or intermediate macular degeneration will progress to a more severe form of the disease.
- **Cardiovascular disease.** If you have diseases that affect your heart and blood vessels, you may be at higher risk of macular degeneration.

Complications

People whose wet macular degeneration has progressed to central vision loss have a higher risk of depression and social isolation. With profound loss of vision, people may see visual hallucinations. This condition is known as Charles Bonnet syndrome.