Don’t Lose Sight of the Basics of Dry AMD

“Healthy Vision Month” event speakers have clearly reminded us of the importance in understanding basic facts about vision and eye disease. This is particularly true for the diagnosis of Dry Age-Related Macular Degeneration, which is a leading public health concern as the Baby Boomer population ages.

Dry AMD is the most common form of AMD in its early or intermediate stages. It occurs in about 90% of people with the condition.

Dry AMD happens when light-sensitive cells in the macula slowly break down. This breakdown gradually blurs central vision in the affected eye. Over time, central vision

Another sign of dry AMD are drusen. They are yellow deposits under the retina that can be small or large in size. Drusen alone do not usually cause vision loss, but people.....
Dry AMD

with large drusen are at risk of developing a more severe form of AMD. The following are the three stages of dry AMD and can occur in one or both eyes.

1. **Early Dry AMD**: People with early dry AMD have either small drusen or a few medium-sized drusen. They may not experience any symptoms or vision loss.

2. **Intermediate Dry AMD**: At this stage, people have either many medium-sized drusen or one or more large drusen. Many people will have no symptoms, so people should not wait for symptoms to determine if they have intermediate dry AMD. With intermediate dry AMD, some people see a blurred spot in the center of their vision and may need more light to read and do other tasks.

3. **Advanced Dry AMD**: People with advanced dry AMD have a breakdown of light-sensitive cells supporting tissue in the macula. This can cause blurred spots in the center of their vision. Over time, the blurred spots may take away a larger area of their central vision.

It is important to remember that vision loss can happen from dry AMD in one eye, but a person may not notice any changes in their overall vision. With the other eye seeing clearly, people can still can drive, read and see fine details.

People may notice changes in their vision if dry AMD affects both eyes or if they develop wet AMD. In any case, a person should see their ophthalmologist as soon as possible for a comprehensive dilated eye exam if blurring occurs.
Coping With Medication Costs

The cost of medications can be burdensome, even with the help of health insurance. Studies show that some people cope with these costs by not using enough of their medications.

For example, people with glaucoma may use eye drops once a day instead of twice a day. Unfortunately, making these decisions can lead to irreversible vision damage.

The following resources can help individuals reduce medication costs and more importantly, save their sight.

National Council on Aging’s Benefits Checkup:

Benefitscheckup.org is a free and confidential service that provides information on various medication assistance programs. Users fill out a short online questionnaire and receive information about programs for which they may qualify.

Eye Care America:

Eye Care America provides an online pharmaceutical directory that lists free or discounted ophthalmic drugs available from major drug companies. Each entry has information on any requirements to apply for the program. Users need to consult with their physicians as part of the application process. To learn more, visit the organization’s website, www.eyecareamerica.org.
Medication Costs

**NeedyMeds:**

The Needymeds website, www.needymeds.org, provides a clearinghouse of information on state and local assistance programs as well as drug company discount prescription programs.

Last, but not least, individuals should talk to their ophthalmologists about medication costs. They may have ideas for treatment alternatives that are more cost-effective.

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**See you in September!**

During the summer months, POB does not host events so that the staff can spend time planning future programs. POB would like to thank the speakers, participants and co-sponsors who have helped POB reach thousands of people with valuable eye health information this year.

Updates from POB’s Healthy Vision Month programs and other news and information will be published in upcoming issues of *Your Eyes Today* and posted on POB’s website, www.youreyes.org. Please do not hesitate to contact POB at (202) 234-1010 with any questions, program ideas or requests during this time.
Kudos to Dr. Howard Weiss for the comprehensive talk on Cataract surgery and intraocular lenses (IOLs) he presented at the April Macular Degeneration Network meeting. We learned how choosing an IOL can be a difficult decision and hope the following points may help people decide which IOL may be right for them.

1. Consider Conventional Monofocal IOLs, if you:
   • Won’t mind wearing glasses after surgery.
   • Don’t feel that multifocal or accommodative lenses are worth the extra cost.
   • Are a candidate for multifocal/accommodative lenses but can’t live with less than perfect vision in all situations.

2. Consider Toric IOLs, if you:
   • Have significant astigmatism and want to see well at either distance or near with less need for glasses.

3. Consider Multifocal IOLs, if you:
   • Place a high value on reducing dependency on eye glasses, especially for reading.
   • Understand that these IOLs have both limitations and advantages for you.
   • Don’t mind the extra out of pocket costs you’ll need to pay for premium lenses.

*The information above is from Johns Hopkins University’s Vision white paper published in 2012.
Calendar of Events

• Tuesday, June 12, 2012
Low Vision Group and Lunch, “Sunlight: Kiss Or Curse?”
11 a.m.- 12:45 p.m.
Guest Speaker: Dianna “DeeDee” Finisecy, Licensed Optician,
Wagner Opticians at Washington Hospital Center
Washington Hospital Center Ophthalmology Clinic
110 Irving Street, NW (bus circle entrance)
Washington, DC 20010
Free parking available. Please call (202) 877-6081 to reserve lunch.

• Wednesday, June 13, 2012
Eye Health Talk, “Maximizing Your Sight,”
10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Guest Speaker: Alexis Malkin, OD,
Low Vision Rehabilitation Specialist,
POB Low Vision Learning Center
Beth El Hebrew Synagogue
3830 Seminary Road
Alexandria, VA 22304
Please call (202) 234-1010 for more information.

• Wednesday, June 20, 2012
Low Vision Group, Open Discussion with Gloria Sussman,
10-11 a.m.
Vinson Hall
6251 Old Dominion Drive
McLean, VA 22101
Please call (202) 234-1010 for more information.
Calendar of Events

• Thursday, June 21, 2012
Vision Support Lunch and Learn, “Better Light for Better Sight,”
12:30-1:30 p.m.
DVD presentation and discussion
Friendship Heights Village Center
4433 South Park Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
Complimentary light lunch available.
Please call (301) 656-2797 to reserve lunch.

• Wednesday, June 28, 2012
“Picture This!” 1-2:30 p.m.
National Gallery of Art,
West Building
Meet at Second Floor Rotunda
4th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20565
Please call (202) 737-4215 for more information.

Save the Date!

November 4, 2012

POB’s 5th Annual American Girl Fashion Show

Find out more at www.youreyes.org
Visit POB’s website, www.youreyes.org, to stay up-to-date on news and event information.

To receive E-mail reminders about upcoming events, please send an E-mail to communications@youreyes.org.

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