Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a disease associated with aging that gradually destroys sharp, central vision. Central vision is needed for seeing objects clearly and for common daily tasks such as reading and driving. AMD affects the macula, the part of the eye that alows seeing of fine details. AMD occurs in two form: dry and wet.

In dry AMD, the light sensitive cells in the macula slowly break down. As fewer cells in the macula are able to function, people will see details less clearly in front of them, such as faces or words in book. Dry AMD often occurs in just one eye at first. Later the other eye can be affected. The most common early sign is blurred vision. The dry form is much more common. More than 85 % of all people have thy dry form. Once dry AMD reaches the advanced stage, no form of treatment can prevent vision loss. The National Eye Institute´s Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS) found that taking a specific high-dose formulation of antioxidants and zinc significantly reduces the risk of advanced AMD and it´s associated vision loss.

Wet AMD occurs when abnormal blood vessels behind the retina start to grow under the macula. Damage to the macula occurs rapidly. With wet AMD, loss of central vision can occur quickly. The classic early symptom is that straight lines appear crooked and wavy. This results when fluid from the leaking blood vessels gather and lifts the macula, distorting vision. Wet AMD can be treated particularly with two main methods: photodynamic therapy and anti-VEGF therapy. The other possibilities are laser coagulation, transpupilar termotherapy, surgical therapy and radiotherapy. The disease and loss of vision may progress despite treatment.

The greatest risk factor is age. Although AMD may occur during middle age, studies show that people over age 65 are clearly at greater risk than the age groups. Other risk factors include: smoking, obesity, race (Whites are much more likely to lose vision from AMD than African Americans), family history, gender (women appear to be at greater risk than men).