

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

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# Dietary advice for people with age-related macular degeneration

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**This leaflet aims to provide advice for patients with age-related macular degeneration on how dietary changes may improve their overall eye health and slow disease progression.**

### **What is age-related macular degeneration?**

Age-related macular degeneration (ARMD) is a condition which primarily affects older adults, usually above the age of 60 years. It can cause one or both eyes to have reduced central vision due to damage to part of the light-sensitive film at the back of the eye, which is known as the macula or macula lutea. The cause for this damage is not fully understood but is thought to involve genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors. The damage may gradually progress over time causing sight loss and may require treatment, such as eye injections, which do not cure the disease but may improve vision.

### **Why is nutrition thought to be important in ARMD?**

Studies to date have investigated the various potential reasons why some people develop ARMD. In large studies performed over several years, it was observed that many people who developed ARMD had a diet which was poor in certain vitamins and minerals found in some green leafy vegetable and oily fish. To investigate whether diet has an effect on ARMD, a landmark clinical trial (known as the AREDS2 trial) gave a vitamin supplement to patients with earlier stages of ARMD. It found that in around one in four people with early or intermediate ARMD, who included the vitamin supplement in their regular diet, did not go on to develop the most severe stage of ARMD requiring injections.

Having a healthy diet is important for your general health too, not just your eyes.

### **What foods should I include in my diet?**

Research suggests that a Mediterranean diet may be beneficial for eye health. It may also improve overall health by helping to lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

A Mediterranean-style diet includes:

- Regular daily intake of fresh fruit and vegetable, particularly green leafy vegetables such as spinach and kale.
- A portion of oily fish at least twice a week, such as salmon, mackerel or tuna.
- Legumes such as lentils, chickpeas.
- Whole grains such as wholewheat flour.
- Olive oil.

If your eye doctor advises, it may be beneficial for you to commence vitamin supplementation if you have signs of early or intermediate ARMD in either eye, even if the other eye has severe disease. It has not been shown to be helpful in preventing ARMD in patients without any eye disease.

### **Where can I look for more information?**

For information about the clinical trials performed and the effect of nutrition on ARMD, please visit The Macular Society website (click on the following link or type into your browser: <https://www.macularsociety.org/support/daily-life/practical-guides/healthy-living/nutrition/>)

### **Further sources of information**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

### **Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

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