



***Vitamin and Mineral Supplements
For Age Related Macular Degeneration
A Patient's Guide to Commonly Asked Questions***

The results of the National Eye Institute's Age Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS) show that treatment with high doses of antioxidant vitamins and mineral supplements is beneficial in slowing the progression of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in some patients.

Remember to check with your medical doctor prior to starting high dose vitamin and mineral supplements for your eyes!

Who should consider taking these supplements?

Only patients with intermediate or advanced age-related macular degeneration (AMD) should consider taking these supplements. In the study, the risk of vision loss from advanced macular degeneration was reduced by 19% in these high-risk patients. No benefit was seen in patients with mild AMD. Treatment did not improve vision already lost from AMD, or prevent the development of AMD in patients who currently do not have AMD. Our doctors can help you determine if this treatment is recommended for you.

What are the recommended doses?

Vitamin C (ascorbic acid)	500 mg
Vitamin E (alphatocopherol)	400 IU
Beta-carotene (precursor to Vitamin A)	25,000 IU or 15 mg
Zinc oxide	80 mg
Cupric oxide	2 mg

Where can I obtain these nutritional supplements?

These doses are too high to achieve by diet and daily multivitamins alone. A number of different companies manufacture supplements according the AREDS formula as described above. **ICAPS, AREDS formula** (by Alcon®) and **Ocuvite Preservision** (by Bausch and Lomb®) are two examples. These supplements are available from your pharmacy without a prescription at an approximate cost of \$14-\$16 per month. It is important to remember that "more is not better". Do not increase the dose beyond that listed above!

Can I continue to take my daily multi-vitamin?

Most of the study participants used daily multivitamins in addition to the AREDS supplements; however, **you should review all of your medications, vitamins and other nutritional supplements with your general medical doctor prior to starting treatment.**

What are the side effects of this treatment?

Most of the patients in the study experienced no serious side effects from treatment. Some patients treated with zinc developed urinary tract problems at a slightly higher rate than those patients not receiving zinc. Slight yellowing of the skin is a known side effect of beta-carotene and is not a serious medical condition. While most doctors feel it is safe to use these supplements, we do not know whether adverse effects can result from their long-term use.

Is there anyone who shouldn't take these supplements?

Studies have shown a link between beta-carotene use and lung cancer among patients who smoke. Therefore, if you smoke, or have recently stopped smoking, you should **not** take formulas that contain the beta-carotene. Supplementing your diet with vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc and copper will still provide some benefit in slowing the progression of your AMD. ***Visi Vite® Smoker's Formula*** is one example of this formula.

If you are a smoker or former smoker, you and your doctor should carefully weigh the risk of cancer against the risk of macular degeneration progression and vision loss.

How will I know if the treatment is working?

The goal of treatment is to prevent or delay progression to the advanced stages of macular degeneration; therefore, you will not experience an improvement in your vision. It is also important to realize that this treatment will not cure the macular degeneration and continued treatment with the supplements is necessary to provide continued benefit.

Are there any other ways I can reduce my risk of vision loss from AMD?

Yes, smoking and ultraviolet light (UV) have also been linked to the progression of macular degeneration. If you smoke, quit. Wear good quality sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat while outdoors to protect your eyes. Monitor your vision daily as instructed by your doctor, and return for follow up visits as recommended.

