



Nutrition and Macular Degeneration (Mild)

The question of how nutrition affects Macular Degeneration (ARM) has been difficult to sort out. There have been 2 major prospective 5 year studies, AREDS(Age Related Eye Disease Study) and AREDS 2, that have tried to look at these issues. The conclusions from these studies are that both the original AREDS vitamin(Preservision) and the newly modified AREDS2 vitamin (for smokers or previous smokers) can reduce the risk of vision loss in 20% of patients. These numbers are not high but still important if you happen to be one of the 1 in 5 who benefits. Smokers or previous smokers should not take the original AREDS version. Your pharmacist can help you sort this out as they both are over the counter or OTC.

The AREDS and AREDS2 formulations are only helpful for those that have the more severe forms of the disease. They were **not** found to help those with milder disease. Your macular degeneration does not qualify as severe enough to take this treatment right now. The addition of Omega 3 fatty acids, in the most recent study, did not seem to convey any additional protection over the currently available AREDS formulas.

Because this disease is common, there are no curative treatments and many patients are desperate to find help, there are many products today that purport to be THE answer. While most won't hurt you, be warned that they are often expensive and there is often no support for their claims. If one treatment were clearly better we would all know it. No supplements have had the rigorous study of the AREDS vitamin.

If you have been taking a particular nutritional supplement for years and your

ARM has been stable, I usually don't suggest that you change. Switching to AREDS in this situation does not seem to make a lot of sense even though the literature is suggestive of doing so. That would be your choice.

Until more good information is available, most ophthalmologists suggest that patients with macular degeneration not smoke or quit if you do, control, blood pressure and cholesterol. With the mild form of the disease you might consider a one-a-day vitamin as well. A diet of leafy green vegetables like spinach, kale or greens is also recommended.

Vitamins are not a treatment for the wet or bleeding forms of the disease. These are treated much differently once they occur and you should consult your ophthalmologist if you develop sudden vision loss or distortion.

