

TALKING WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Source: The First Year: Age Related Macular Degeneration by Daniel L. Roberts (*Marlowe & Co., New York NY, 2006*)

Question: I feel intimidated about asking questions of my doctor, because he always seems to be in a rush. And then I either forget what I want to ask, or I don't remember his answers. What can I do?

Your doctor is busy. He cannot spend an inordinate amount of time with you, but he will take the time to answer your questions if you are well-prepared and concise. The script below will help you to get the answers you need. Take it to your next appointment and write in the doctor's answers, or ask him to write them in for you so you can study them later in your own good time. I hope this will be helpful to both you and your doctor.

Some questions simply do not have answers, so you can avoid frustrating both you and your doctor by not asking them. They are:

1. Will I lose all of my central vision?

Each person is different as to how long it takes for the cells to degenerate. Macular degeneration is a progressive disease, but stabilization for months or years can drastically slow down its progression. Therefore, complete loss of central vision could take anywhere from weeks (in some wet macular degeneration cases with no treatment) to years, or degeneration may never reach its full potential if your life span is shorter than the course of the disease.

2. When are they going to find a cure?

A great deal of research is going on in many areas, giving reason to hope for a cure within the next decade. Any more accurate prediction than that is purely guesswork. The best you can do right now is to practice good nutritional habits, avoid pollution and smoking, protect your eyes from the sun, and stay informed about possible treatments. When the cure does come, then you will have done the best you can to take advantage of it.

Questions For Your Doctor

1. What stage of AMD am I in?

Left eye (OS):

- early dry
- intermediate dry
- advanced dry
- subfoveal wet
- juxtafoveal wet
- extrafoveal wet

Right eye (OD):

- early dry
- intermediate dry
- advanced dry
- subfoveal wet
- juxtafoveal wet
- extrafoveal wet

2. If I have subfoveal wet AMD, which subtype do I have?

Left eye (OS):

- predominantly classic
- occult
- minimally classic

Right eye (OD):

- predominantly classic
- occult
- minimally classic

3. Are my drusen "hard" or "soft?"

Left eye (OS):

- hard
- soft

Right eye (OD):

- hard
- soft

4. What tests did you use to confirm my diagnosis?

- internal ocular examination
- fluorescein angiogram
- indocyanine green angiogram
- ocular coherence tomography (OCT)

5. What is my acuity?

Uncorrected:

Left (OS): ___/___ Right (OD): ___/___ Both (OU): ___/___

Corrected:

Left (OS): ___/___ Right (OD): ___/___ Both (OU): ___/___

6. What are my treatment options?

- laser photocoagulation
- photodynamic therapy with Visudyne
- photodynamic therapy with Visudyne + steroid
- steroid only
- antiangiogenic (VEGF blocker) drug therapy

(identify:)

- combination drug therapy

(identify:)

- none

7. Am I a candidate for experimental surgery?

- macular translocation
- retinal transplantation
- stem cell transplantation
- other:

8. What nutritional supplements do you recommend?

- none
- AREDS formula only (see www.mdsupport.org/library/study.html)
- multi-supplement containing AREDS formula
- multi-supplement only
- lutein (dosage: _____)
- zeaxanthin (dosage: _____)
- statins (dosage: _____)
- omega-3 (dosage: _____)
- CoQ10 (dosage: _____)
- other:

9. Where can I go locally to receive assistance with low-vision devices and other low rehabilitation training?

10. Do you have informational handouts that I can take home with me?

- yes
- no

11. How often should I be evaluated?
