Age-related macular degeneration, commonly referred to as AMD, is the main cause of visual impairment in adults over age 60. AMD typically affects Caucasians but may affect people of any race. There are two forms of macular degeneration. Non-exudative or “dry” macular degeneration affects 90% of people with AMD (Figures 1-4). People with dry AMD typically have good vision, but vision may slowly deteriorate over many years. There is no treatment for dry macular degeneration at this time, however, there are several national clinical trials researching treatment options. The “wet” or advanced form of AMD causes loss of central vision (Figures 5-6). Central vision is the part of vision that allows you to see fine details, such as reading and driving. AMD does not affect the peripheral or side vision. In the United States, as many as 11 million people are affected by macular degeneration and of those more than 1 million people have the “wet” form of macular degeneration.

For more information on Macular Degeneration or other eye diseases visit www.carolinaeye.com
Quit Smoking
Smoking increases the risk of advanced macular degeneration by 2-3 times and is the single most modifiable factor in reducing your risk.

Take Vitamins
A balanced diet throughout life can help protect your eyes from advanced macular degeneration. In 2001, a landmark study of the National Eye Institute showed the benefits of specific supplemental vitamins and zinc for those with macular degeneration by reducing the risk of developing advanced macular degeneration by 25%. This formulation of vitamins and minerals is a higher concentration than what can be obtained through diet alone or with a multivitamin. In 2013, a follow-up study showed the possible benefits of Lutein and Zeaxanthin but Omega-3 did not have a positive effect. Speak with your eye care provider to determine if these vitamins and minerals may be right for you.

Wear UV Sunglasses
Lenses with UVA and UVB filters can help to decrease the risk of developing advanced macular degeneration. Wear hats and sunglasses as much as possible to protect your eyes.

Exercise Regularly
Walking and regular exercise are great ways to keep your heart and mind healthy. An active lifestyle has also been shown to decrease the risk of developing advanced macular degeneration by 70%.

Monitor Your Vision
If you have been diagnosed with macular degeneration, keep your regular appointments with your eye care provider. Between appointments, monitor your vision with an Amsler grid see Figure 7 for one you can cut out and use. If there are changes when looking at the grid, it may be a sign that you have developed wet macular degeneration. Notify your eye care provider immediately.

Genetic Testing
There is a clear genetic predisposition to age-related macular degeneration. The risk of developing advanced macular degeneration is 50% in people who have a relative with AMD, but only 12% if there is no family history of AMD. Recently, commercial genetic tests have become available to determine the risk of developing advanced AMD. Speak with your eye care provider to determine if genetic testing may be right for you.