Vitamin D and AMD

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Vitamin D has been studied extensively in relation to bone health as well as cancer. Now, a team led by a researcher at the University at Buffalo has discovered that vitamin D may play a significant role in eye health, specifically in the possible prevention of age-related macular degeneration among women who are more genetically prone to developing the sight-damaging disease.

In a paper published Aug. 27, 2016 in JAMA Ophthalmology online, Amy Millen, associate professor at UB’s School of Public Health and her team found that women who are deficient in vitamin D and have a specific high-risk genotype are 6.7 times more likely to develop AMD than women with sufficient vitamin D status and no high risk genotype.

“Most people have heard that you should eat carrots to help your vision. However, there appear to be many other ways that adequate nutrition can support eye health. Having adequate vitamin D status may be one of them,” says Millen, PhD, the study’s lead author. “This is not a study that can, alone, prove a causal association, but it does suggest that if you’re at high genetic risk for AMD, having a sufficient vitamin D status might help reduce your risk.”

“To our knowledge, this is the first study that has looked at the interaction between genetic risk and vitamin D status in the context of age-related eye disease,” adds Millen. (Click here or see: Reports @ eyesight.org for more information)
Dear Liz:

Am I At Greater Risk from AMD Because I Work Outside?

The results also showed that contributing events leading up to disease take place many years before structural signs become apparent. In other words, sun exposures in our early years may contribute to our developing AMD as adults.

In addition to sun exposure, researchers considered smoking history, occupation, and iris color. Fundus photographs were used to stage the AMD.

Bottom line: The study concluded with recommendations to begin wearing sunglasses and brimmed hats at an early age to minimize sunlight exposure.

Liz Traurnicht - Pres MD Foundation

In spite of long days at the beach or an “outside” job, you and I may never suffer from the bad effects of excessive sun exposure. But we know that these effects include cataracts and skin cancer.

Regarding Age-Related Macular Degeneration, your question was addressed in a European study of 3700 people first published in the April, 2016 issue of “Retina”.

According to Dr. Tina Schick, Dept. of Ophthalmology, University Hospital of Cologne, Germany, “Sunlight exposure at younger age has an influence on the development of severe eye disease ... decades later”.

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Thank You For Your Service

by Joe Fontenot MD, CLVT
Medical Director, Community Services for Vision Rehabilitation (CSV)
Captain, U.S. Army Medical Corps, 1963-65

Many veterans of military service do not realize that help for their vision loss may be available through the Veterans Administration. Vision loss may be covered, and much help obtained, even if vision loss is not service connected. Low vision resulting from macular degeneration, diabetic eye disease, glaucoma, etc. may be covered by the VA.

In the last few years, the public attitude towards veterans and active service members has changed dramatically. This seems to have begun on 9-11-2001. Active service personnel are now honored, put on airlines first, and publicly commended everywhere. Likewise, help for disabled and visually impaired veterans has greatly improved.

About two years ago I was working with an administrator for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. He asked me “Were you in the military?” I answered: “Yes, I was drafted in 1963”. “Were you in Vietnam?” “Yes”, I answered. He said “Thank you for your service”. I was stunned!

Continued ...
“Thank you” ... continued

This was the first time anyone had ever said that to me, and it had been almost 50 years since I left the Army. Since then, several others have said the same, including, most recently, a young taxi driver.

What can the VA do to help the visually impaired veteran? The VIST coordinator.

The VA has a “Vision Impaired Service Team”, or “VIST” group led by VIST coordinators. Their sole job is to help the visually impaired. The number of VIST coordinators has increased in the last few years. Despite the recent bad publicity that VA medical services have received, the VIST coordinators and their services have steadily improved. The number of VIST counselors has increased and they are dedicated, compassionate professionals who are able to help almost any eligible veteran.

The VIST coordinator evaluates each veteran individually, obtains information and recommendations from their eye doctors and other health care providers, and does whatever is necessary to help improve independence, function and quality of life. This includes provision of aids and devices such as magnifiers and other adaptive devices.
Blind Rehabilitation Centers (BRCs)

The VA maintains ten “Blind Rehabilitation Centers” in the United States. These are specialized in-patient facilities, fully staffed with optometrists, occupational therapists, assistive technology specialists and others. They provide:

- Orientation and mobility
- Communication skills
- Activities of daily living
- Manual skills
- Visual skills
- Computer access training
- Social/recreational activities

These are in-patient facilities. Weekends are free, and the veteran may leave the facility but must stay in during the week. For those willing to do it, this is rehabilitation at its best. There are twelve such centers scattered throughout the United States:

Birmingham, Alabama       Tucson, Arizona
Long Beach, California    Palo Alto, California
West Haven, Connecticut   West Palm Beach, Florida
Augusta, Georgia          Hines, Illinois
Biloxi, Mississippi       Cleveland, Ohio
San Juan, Puerto Rico     Waco, Texas

For more BRC information go to: http://www.rehab.va.gov/PROSTHETICS/blindrehab/index.asp

Continued...
Definitions

**Ophthalmologist**
A practitioner in the medical science of surgery and care of the eye and its related structures. An M.D. degree is required.

**Retina specialist**
A medical doctor trained as an ophthalmologist, who has received additional training in diseases and surgery of the retina and vitreous.

**Optometrist**
A degree (O.D.), independent, primary health care provider skilled in the co-management of eye health and vision care, including examination, diagnosis, treatment, management of diseases/disorders, prescription of eye-glasses/contact lenses, and provision of low vision aids and therapy.

**Optician**
A person who designs or manufactures ophthalmic appliances or optical instruments (“ophthalmic optician”) or deals in prescriptions (“dispensing optician”).

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**“Thank You” ... continued**

**How to establish eligibility for VA services**

To be eligible, veterans must have served on active duty for any length of time before September 1980 or for 24 months continuously after that date.

The best way to establish eligibility is to find your discharge papers (DD214) and go to your closest Eligibility Center. All VA hospitals, and many outpatient clinics, have Eligibility Centers. To find one near you, call your local VA facility or 1-877-222-9387 or go to: [http://www2.va.gov/directory](http://www2.va.gov/directory)

Eligibility is established by filling out a form - the VA 10-10EZ form and providing your DD214. You can obtain a 10-10EZ form by going to [https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010eZ](https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010eZ). You can also register online, beginning at this site.

**Category 4 or “Catastrophic Disability”**

Some VA services are subject to income requirements. However, if you are legally blind (visual acuity of less than 20/200 or visual field 20 degrees or less) the income requirements may be waived by claiming “Priority 4” or “Catastrophic Disability”.

To find out about this, talk to your VIST coordinator or call 1-877-222-8387. The VA form for this is VA10-0383.

**Conclusion**

If you are a veteran and have impaired vision because of macular degeneration or any other cause, you may benefit from VA health services. Give it a try. You may be surprised. And thank you for your service.

**VA phone numbers and web sites**

1) The main phone number for VA Healthcare is 1-877-222-8387 and the main VA website is [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

2) Location of VA services in the US [http://www2.va.gov/directory/placedirectory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1](http://www2.va.gov/directory/placedirectory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1)

3) Eligibility info, go to [http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/)

4) To obtain 10-10 EZ form or start registration online: [https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov](https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov) or call 1-877-222-8387
Exclusive Online Videos Featuring World’s Leading Eye Researchers

Dr. David Seftel, Director of Research Development for the Macular Degeneration Foundation, is interviewing the world’s foremost scientists and medical practitioners who are actively investigating cures and treatments for Macular Degeneration and related eye diseases.

Visit MacularNews.org for the latest news and register to receive an email notice when new videos are first posted.

Donations

The Macular Degeneration Foundation, Inc. is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization.

Please visit our website at eyesight.org to make a tax deductible donation.

Checks may be mailed to:

Macular Degeneration Foundation, Inc.,
P.O. Box 531313,
Henderson, NV 89053

Call: 888-633-3937 (USA)
Call: 702-450-2908 (Intl)
Email: liz@eyesight.org

Disclaimer - Articles in the Magnifier are for information only and are not an endorsement by the Macular Degeneration Foundation editorial staff.
Clinical Trials in Vision Research

Clinical trials in vision research have led to new medications, surgeries, and methods for disease detection that have saved or improved the eyesight of millions of people.

The National Eye Institute (NEI), one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), conducts and sponsors clinical trials to discover safe and effective methods for preventing, diagnosing, and treating eye disease and vision loss. Established in 1968, the NEI is the largest sponsor of vision research in the United States.

If you or someone you know is thinking about taking part in a clinical trial, visit the NEI website at https://nei.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials_facts.