Chocolate! Chocolate! Chocolate!

In recent years at least two studies demonstrated the benefits of flavonoid-rich dark chocolate over milk chocolate as to improved vision. This was good news for chocolate lovers.

In a new double-blind randomized clinical trial, the short-term benefits of dark chocolate were once again put to the test. Unfortunately, this time they saw no benefit to visual function of either dark or milk chocolate.

Researchers admit sample size was small (22 participants) and further trials would be needed to rule in or out possible long-term benefits.

**Conclusion:** Chocolate tastes good ... dark or light.

Trial Information Source: Department of Ophthalmology Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany.
Amsler Grid ... Continued from Page 1

The Amsler Grid is basically a square of horizontal and vertical lines. It gets its name from Marc Amsler, a Swiss ophthalmologist who began promoting its use in 1947.

When used properly, it can help the user to detect visual distortions and loss of vision caused by such diseases as macular edema, central serous chorioretinopathy (CSC) and age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Early detection of macular disorders is very important ... especially today when effective treatments are available when caught early in the process. The Amsler Grid has helped people with macular disease to identify changes in their condition and report it to their eye doctor for evaluation.

What Forms Do Amsler Grids Take?

1. Paper

Amsler Grids on paper are the most common form and are available from your doctor and many sources over the Internet for free. In an attempt to improve accuracy, some use colored backgrounds and lines, while others use a special number of lines and line spacing.

2. Mobile Device “Apps”

Amsler Grid “Apps” are also available for tablets and cell phones for both Android and Apple brands.

3. Portable Viewers

We evaluated a portable key chain “viewer” (as pictured above). It is a novel approach, but we found it to be imprecise and subject to misinterpretation.

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Limitations of the Amsler Grid

Because the Amsler Grid has limitations, some eye care professionals do not recommended it as a way to “self-assess” disease progression. Here are some of the reasons why:

1. Vision
   It requires reasonably good near vision to discern the grid lines.

2. Compliance
   Poor patient compliance. Meaning, not everyone is willing or able to maintain a good routine of self-assessment.

3. Interpretation
   The Amsler Grid is a “subjective” test and prone to misinterpretation.

4. Imprecise
   When compared to the tools available to eye doctors, the Amsler Grid detects only about one-half of the areas in the visual field where vision is absent or deficient.

5. Unreliable
   The eyes and brain can play tricks on you. One of these is called “Perceptual Completion”. This is when the brain fills in or completes gaps in the visual field of each eye. Another challenge is called “Central Fixation”, which causes visual confusion when looking at multiple lines. Perceptual completion and central fixation can make the Amsler Grid unreliable.

See lowvision.preventblindness.org or mdsupport.org
Amsler Grid ... Continued from Page 3

Specialized Amsler Grids

A search of the Internet will find references to these less common, high-tech Amsler Grids.

* Threshold Amsler Grid (TAG)
* Accelerated Amsler Grid
* Deformable Amsler Grid
* Three-dimensional Computer-automated Threshold Amsler Grid (3D-CTAG)

These (and other) modified Amsler Grids are attempts to improve the test for use at home between routine eye examinations. Progress is being made in the area of computer and tablet based software to identify macular disorders. All, however, have limitations that make regular visits to your optometrist, ophthalmologist and/or retinal specialist the best way to monitor your vision.

Summary

1. First and foremost, have your eyes examined on a regular basis. How often depends on your age, risk factors and whether you currently wear eyeglasses or contact lenses. Most eye care professionals recommend a comprehensive test every year or two.

2. If you notice a change in your vision, contact an eye care professional immediately.

3. If you have a diagnosis of macular degeneration, an AMSLER GRID may be useful as a “follow-up” tool for monitoring changes in your central vision between eye exams. However, it should never be used to screen yourself for macular disease. Leave that to a trained professional.
Call it “research” … or just plain laziness, but for the past two years my wife and I have been using a device that allows us to control much of our home environment without lifting a finger. I can assure you, turning on a reading light behind your easy chair with a voice command is kinda cool.

Except for the normal age-related farsightedness common to people like us in their 70’s, we enjoy good vision. But for those with little or no vision, there are now assistive devices that not only make life easier, but can be a literal life saver.

One such device, called Echo, is manufactured and sold by Amazon. Actually, they produce a family of devices including the Echo Dot (pictured here), Echo Show and a multitude of “smart” accessories. (Note: Google Home is another line of similar products and services)

The Amazon Echo Dot and Echo Show must be plugged in to a power source. Otherwise they operate wirelessly using your home’s wifi network. Setup is not difficult, but I recommend any 13 year old to give you a hand.

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What Can You Do With The Echo Dot and Echo Show?

The list of abilities (called “Skills” in the Echo world) is very long and growing every month. The “Dot” and “Show” work very much alike in that they respond to voice commands, but the “Show” includes a high resolution touch screen and camera. Here is a short list of Echo Skills that may be of interest to those with visual impairments.

- Turn lights and appliances on/off
- Make phone calls
- Tell you the time
- Set alarms and timers
- Change the thermostat
- Create shopping lists
- Play music & radio stations
- Control speaker volume
- Check the weather

Some of Echo Show’s Additional Features

- Search for, speak, display and save recipes
- Make video calls
- Read and speak the words on labels, packages and medicine bottles

Here are links to two informative YouTube Videos:

1. Echo Dot Demo
2. Echo Show Demo
Exclusive Online Videos Featuring World’s Leading Eye Researchers

The Macular Degeneration Foundation interviews the world’s foremost scientists, medical practitioners and inventors. Visit Eyesight.org for the latest news and register to receive an email notice when new videos are first posted.

Donations Appreciated

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,
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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 Trial Information

Nat’l Eye Institute
800-411-1222 or www.nei.nih.gov

Clinical trials have guidelines called “inclusion” and “exclusion” criteria. These criteria (age, gender, type and stage of disease, etc.) keep participants safe and ensure researchers will be able to answer the questions they plan to study.

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Treat and Extend Regimen

Nagoya City University & Sugita Eye Hospital
Nagoya, Japan

Phase 4: Evaluation of the Usefulness of a Treat and Extend Regimen Using Ranibizumab for Neovascular AMD.

Treat and Extend Regimen (TER) may contribute to the improvement to a patients’ mentality, since the treatment intervals are extended if there were no signs of recurrence. Therefore, we have planned to examine the psychological impact of TER using Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), in addition to the improvement of visual acuity and central retinal thickness.

Clinical Study Identifier: NCT02321839