

## Patient information

# Wet aged related macular degeneration (AMD)

### What is wet age related macular degeneration (AMD)?

The macula is the central part of the retina, at the back of the eye, that is crucial for good vision. In Wet AMD new, weak blood vessels grow at the macula. These can leak and eventually cause scarring. Wet AMD can progress quickly and can affect your ability to perform everyday tasks.

You may have been offered an intravitreal injection of Lucentis or Eylea because you have been found to have 'wet' age-related macular degeneration. Scientific advances have shown that a 'growth factor' called Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor A (VEGF A) is responsible for the development of abnormal blood vessels in wet macular degeneration and these drugs (an *anti*-VEGF drug) block the action of this growth factor.

The trials have shown that about a third of treated eyes are expected to improve vision by three or more lines on the standard testing chart. The majority of the other two thirds of the eyes treated are anticipated to be stabilised and avoid a moderate or severe loss of vision.

### I am receiving Lucentis, how often will I need to attend?

People will start with a course of three injections, given into the eye, each one a month apart. You will then attend for regular check-ups with an injection every four weeks until your vision and retinal (OCT) scan is stable. Stable means that there is no significant change in your vision and your OCT shows no marked alteration. Once this is achieved you may be placed on a 'treat and extend' regime.

## What is a 'treat and extend' regime?

This is a designed to give an individual approach to treatment. Based on your specific needs, once your condition is stable treatment can be initially extended by **two week** intervals. So if you were having injections at **four weeks** your next visit will be **six weeks** later.

When you attend for your next check-up and injection if your vision and OCT scan has remained stable your doctor may decide to extend your appointment interval to **eight weeks**.

If your condition is not stable, you will still receive an injection after your assessment but your next appointment will be at a shorter interval.

Once your Wet AMD is stable for two to three visits at 12 week intervals, you may be transferred to a '**Monitoring**' clinic where you will have your vision and OCT scan performed, but only receive an injection (on a separate visit) if there is evidence of reactivation of your condition.

## I am receiving Eylea, how often will I need to attend?

People will start with a course of three injections, given into the eye, each one a month apart. You will then attend at eight week intervals for an injection after an assessment of your vision and probably an OCT scan. After one year (seven injections) and if your condition is stable, you may be placed on a 'treat and extend' regime (see above).

## What do the appointments involve?

Please ensure you bring your current spectacles with you to each clinic visit.

Eye drops will be put into your eyes. These will enlarge your pupils and will cause some blurring of your vision and you may experience some glare from bright lights. Driving is not recommended for at least six hours after having drops instilled.

We have a number of different clinics that you may attend:

- **One-stop clinic**

If you are put on a 'treat and extend' regime you will attend our 'one stop' clinic. Your vision will be assessed and you will have a scan of your eyes with an Optical Coherence Tomographer (OCT). An injection will also be administered and you can then go home.

Your visit records will be reviewed by the medical team within two weeks and the next appointment will be booked at the time interval requested by the clinician.

This service is only available at the West Suffolk Hospital eye clinic.

- **Monitoring clinic**

If you attend a 'monitoring' clinic you will have your vision and OCT assessed by a member of the team before returning home. The doctors will review the results within two weeks of the appointment and further appointments booked as requested. Should there be a significant change in your vision or disease activity you may need to attend for an injection (on a separate visit).

You may be able to attend your monitoring appointment at a location closer to home as this service is available at Sudbury and Newmarket as well as West Suffolk Hospital.

- **Doctor-led clinic**

Appointments with a doctor will be scheduled as deemed necessary by your consultant, but as a minimum you will see a doctor on an annual basis.

Some patients may **not be suitable** for either a 'one stop' or 'monitoring' clinic and require regular assessment by a clinician.

- **Injection treatment clinic**

When you start your treatment your first few injections should be in a 'treatment' clinic. Prior to the injection in your eye a member of the eye team will ask you some questions about your general health and any medication you are taking. You may also have your vision assessed.

To read more about the injection treatment, please refer to our 'Intravitreal Injection' information leaflet

## **If I have lost some vision, will stronger glasses help instead of having treatment?**

Think of your eye like a camera: if the film inside is damaged, even if you replace the lens at the front of the camera, the photos will still come out distorted / blurred. This is the same with your eyes, if AMD affects the back of your eye. If left untreated it cannot be simply fixed by a stronger pair of glasses.

## **Driving and sight loss**

A diagnosis of macular degeneration does not necessarily mean that you have to stop driving, as you may still meet the legal requirements to drive.

Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) can give lots of information specific for your level of vision about driving and what this might mean for you.

For further information about driving and your sight, please refer to our 'Driving' information leaflet.

## **Charles Bonnett Syndrome**

Patients with macular degeneration may develop Charles Bonnet Syndrome, a condition where they experience sharp, clear visual hallucinations despite their normal vision being blurry or hazy.

For further information about Charles Bonnet Syndrome please refer to our 'Charles Bonnet' information leaflet or ask to speak to our ECLO who can help you understand more about the condition.

## **Additional information**

If you feel your eye condition has already started to affect your daily living tasks like driving, employment, reading, shopping our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer can offer information about the local and national services that are available to you.

Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer can also offer advice on any support and entitlements that you may be eligible for. No appointment needed just ask at reception or call direct on 01284 712805.

## **Useful contact numbers**

AMD Co-ordinator: 01284 712721

Eye Clinic: 01284 713815

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer: 01284 712805

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)*

<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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