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The Best Vision Newsletter

Issue 4
July 2002

The Age-Related Eye Disease Study and Macular Degeneration

Age-related macular degeneration (ARMD) is the leading cause of visual loss and blindness in people over 65 in the developed world. The recently released Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS) showed that high doses of antioxidant vitamins and zinc may reduce the progression of ARMD.

AREDS was supported by the National Eye Institute and was conducted at 11 clinical centers with 4,757 participants between the ages of 55 and 80. Participants were enrolled into one of four categories based on the degree of ARMD. Patients were excluded who did not have at least early ARMD, and the remaining groups were randomized to placebo, antioxidant vitamins alone, zinc alone, or the combination of antioxidant vitamins and zinc. The antioxidant preparation used was 500 mg vitamin C, 400 IU vitamin E, and 15 mg of beta-carotene. The average follow-up time was 6.3 years.

The combination of antioxidants and zinc reduced the risk of developing advanced ARMD by approximately 25 percent. The zinc-only and the antioxidant-only groups also experienced a reduction in the risk of ARMD but at lower rates than the combination treatment. Interestingly, treatment did not reduce the progression of early ARMD (no extensive drusen, large drusen or geographic atrophy) to moderate ARMD (increase in size and/or area of drusen). Also, antioxidants and zinc did not reduce the development of cataracts. Of note, AREDS did not include Lutein or Zeaxanthin; thus their potential benefit to macular health remains unknown.

The results of the AREDS for ARMD are exciting because preventive measures can be taken to reduce the risk of developing advanced ARMD. Although treatment with antioxidants and zinc did not appear to affect the progression of early to moderate ARMD, patients with intermediate (extensive drusen, large drusen or geographic atrophy) or advanced ARMD in one eye should be considered for antioxidant and zinc treatment to prevent disease progression.

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We dedicate ourselves to enhancing the quality of life for every individual whose life we touch, by helping each to see his or her best, and by preserving our patients' vision and eye health throughout life.

Do YOU have questions regarding
CATARACT and/or REFRACTIVE SURGERY?

ASK US

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

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