

Driving when you have macular degeneration

- For most people, driving represents freedom, control and independence. Driving enables most people to get to the places they want to go and to see the people they want to see when they want.
- Driving is a complex skill. Our ability to drive safely can be challenged by changes in our physical, emotional and mental condition.
- The goal of this brochure is to help you, your family and your health care professional talk about how macular degeneration may affect your ability to drive safely.

How can having macular degeneration affect my driving?

- Macular degeneration can distort your central vision and can lead to loss of sharp vision. Macular degeneration also can make it difficult to see road signs, traffic, and people walking, and may affect your ability to drive safely.

Can I still drive with macular degeneration?

- If your eye care expert has told you that you have macular degeneration, there are certain things that you should know and do to stay a safe driver.
- People experience the visual effects of macular degeneration in different ways. In the early stages of macular

degeneration, you may only have small central areas of vision loss or distortion that may not affect your driving. In fact, you may not even notice any change in your eyesight. As macular degeneration progresses, it may become harder for you to see clearly. This may make you worry about your vision and make it harder to drive safely.

What can I do when macular degeneration affects my driving?

- If you have a family history of macular degeneration or have any changes in your central vision, you should immediately contact your eye care expert. After a definitive diagnosis of macular degeneration, how often you visit your eye care expert depends on your doctor's advice, the type of macular degeneration that you have, and your symptoms.
- Although there is not much that can be done to stop the disease from getting worse, the use of antioxidant vitamins may help retard its progression. Additionally, there are surgical procedures that may help if they are done in the early stages of the disease.
- Your eye care expert may refer you to a driver rehabilitation specialist who can go on a drive with you to see if macular degeneration has affected your driving. The specialist also may offer training to improve your driving skills. Improving your skills could help keep you and others around you safe. To find a driver rehabilitation specialist near you, go to www.aota.org/olderdriver and look up

the name of a specialist in your State. You also can call hospitals and rehabilitation facilities to find an occupational therapist who can help with the driving skills assessment and remediation. Depending on where you live, you may need to travel to nearby communities to find these services.

What if I have to give up and cut back on driving?

You can keep your independence even if you have to give up or cut back on your driving. It may take planning ahead on your part, but it will get you to the places you want to go and the people you want to see. Consider:

- ◆ rides with family and friends;
 - ◆ taxi cabs;
 - ◆ shuttle buses or vans; and
 - ◆ public buses, trains and subways.
- Also, senior centers, and religious and other local service groups often offer transportation services for older adults in your community.

Who can I call for help with transportation?

 Call the ElderCare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 and ask for your local Office on Aging, or go to their website at www.eldercare.gov.

- Contact your regional transit authority, which can tell you which bus or train to take.



Call Easter Seals Project ACTION
(Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation) at
1-800-659-6428 or go to their website at www.easterseals.com/transportation.

Where do I find out more about macular degeneration and its treatment?

- Your first step is to talk with your doctor and eye care expert. You can also contact the:

American Optometric Association
314-991-4100
www.aoa.org

American Academy of Ophthalmology
415-561-8500
www.aoa.org

National Eye Institute
301-496-5248
www.nei.nih.gov

- You also can get a copy of the "Age Page On Older Drivers" from the National Institute on Aging by calling 1-800-222-2225, or by going to their website at www.niapublications.org/engagepages/drivers.asp

Wear your safety belt

Always wear your safety belt when you are driving or riding in a car. Make sure that every person who is riding with you also is buckled up. Wear your safety belt even if your car has air bags.

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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



American Optometric Association



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