

Macular Degeneration



Description

Macular degeneration describes a group of vision conditions involving a deterioration of the macula (central area of the retina surrounding the fovea).

Macular degeneration causes loss of sharp central vision, loss of colour discrimination, inability to see fine detail, and results in a central scotoma (blind spot). It is caused by damage to the nerves in the eye and the macula progressively deteriorates.

The condition may be classified as 'wet' or 'dry', depending on the type.

Stargardt's disease is the most common type of juvenile macular degeneration.

Implications

In macular degeneration, both eyes are usually affected, however, the rate and degree of vision loss can be unequal in both eyes and very widely among individuals.

Distortion and blind spots in the centre of vision are common. The scotoma may be a "black" spot or a blurred area in the field of vision.

While central vision is lost, peripheral vision is usually retained. Therefore, mobility is usually not poorly affected, although depth perception difficulties may occur.

Reading efficiency is often impaired and there is a reduced ability to visually access near work and fine detail, and to perceive contrast.

Photophobia (sensitivity to light) may increase in some individuals.

In advancing disease, the ability to drive, identify facial features and expressions, and access print are significantly impacted.

Individuals may need to develop eccentric viewing techniques (looking off-centre or beyond the object of interest to view with their side vision).

Low vision devices usually provide enhanced vision access.

Frequent eye examinations are important to monitor the disease.

Accessing the curriculum

Reduce classroom environmental glare. Avoid whiteboards, reflective white paper (buff may provide better access), and instruction next to windows.

Provide seating at the front of the class to ensure the student has the best possible view of the teaching focus.

Consider enlarging print or using dark lined paper. Ensure strong contrast.

Reduce visual clutter by ensuring learning materials are well spaced and well organised on a page.

Remove unnecessary visual information.

Use bullet points rather than long narrative text when presenting information.

Allow the student extra time to process visual information, to use eccentric viewing techniques, and to reduce visual fatigue. When fatigue is present, offer eye rest time.

Use additional verbal descriptions to support instruction and understanding.

In some instances, magnification aids may assist.

Modify physical activities and provide detailed verbal instructions of all actions, skills and game rules (where necessary).

Click to see an [Interactive Eye Diagram](#) (web link)

As this document contains generic information, please consult with the Vision Education Program in regard to individual educational needs.

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