

## Macular Degeneration Study To Evaluate Potential Protective Effects of Antioxidants and Fish Oils

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**A**ge-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of vision loss in the United States for people over age 60. The Shiley Eye Center at the University of California, San Diego is participating in a study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) designed to determine if a modified combination of vitamins, minerals and fish oil can further slow vision loss from AMD.

The nationwide study builds upon results from the earlier Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS) which found that high-dose antioxidant vitamins and minerals taken by mouth reduced the risk of progression to advanced AMD by 25 percent, and the risk of moderate vision loss by 19 percent. In this second study, called AREDS2, lutein and zeaxanthin (plant-derived yellow pigments) and the omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA (derived from fish and vegetable oils) will be added to the study formulation to determine if these nutrients further decrease the risk of progressive vision loss.

“So many people are taking vitamins and supplements to prolong life and prevent disease. This large, well-organized study will provide hard evidence regarding these specific supplements and their value for the prevention of AMD,” said Stuart I. Brown, M.D., chair of the department of ophthalmology at the UC San Diego School of Medicine and director of the UCSD Shiley Eye Center.

AMD damages the macula, the small area near the center of the retina responsible for central vision. As the disease progresses, the patient experiences blurred central vision. There are two forms of AMD. Wet AMD is caused by abnormal growth of blood vessels under the macula leading to rapid loss of central vision. Dry AMD is more common and occurs when the light-sensitive cells in the macula slowly break down. Dry AMD can progress into wet AMD if untreated.

“Vision loss from AMD is an important public health issue. This study may help us find a better way to treat this devastating disorder,” said Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D., director of the NIH. Nearly

two million Americans have vision loss from advanced AMD and an additional seven million AMD sufferers are at risk for vision loss. An estimated 60,000 San Diegans have AMD.

Volunteers for the study must be between age 50 and 85, and have AMD in both eyes, or advanced AMD in one eye. Participants must be willing to participate in a preliminary screening, and if eligible, to return within three months to begin the study. Participants must be available for yearly eye examinations for at least five years.

Participants will be offered treatment with the original AREDS formulation, which is now standard of care, in addition to taking variations of the formula to evaluate the efficacy of the supplements being studied through the AREDS2 trial.

To learn more or to volunteer for the Age-Related Eye Disease Study 2, contact Barbara Brody, Ph.D., director of the division of community ophthalmology at the UCSD Shiley Eye Center and the study's principal investigator, or Jenie Chung, study coordinator, at 858- 822-1234.

For a list of the national study centers, eligibility requirements and other information, go to [www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov) or call 1-877-AREDS-80 (1-877-273-3780).

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#### UCSD Shiley Eye Center

The UCSD Shiley Eye Center was founded in 1991. The Shiley Eye Center complex on the UCSD Medical Center-La Jolla campus integrates comprehensive patient care and unique surgical practices, with a stellar research program, and community outreach and education services serving the region. These services include a self-management educational program to assist patients with Macular Degeneration, providing them with the ability to cope effectively with the illness and its side effects so that they can better function within society.

#### National Institutes of Health/National Eye Institute

The National Eye Institute (NEI) is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and is the Federal government's lead agency for vision research that leads to sight-saving treatments and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. For more information, visit the NEI Website at <http://www.nei.nih.gov/>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — The Nation's Medical Research Agency — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov/>.

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