

AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION: FACTS & ASSISTIVE AIDS

By [Optelec](#)

Age-related Macular Degeneration, AMD, is one of the most common eye diseases in older adults and is reported in 1.5 million Canadians. Sight loss caused by macular degeneration and other eye conditions affect almost 19% of the population in Canada. ([CNIB](#)) Since AMD can begin almost undetected regular check-ups by an eye care professional are especially important to catch this disease early and start treatments to preserve as much usable vision as possible.

Facts about AMD:

- AMD is a genetic disease. A family history of AMD will put you at a higher risk.
- The two types of AMD are Wet and Dry. Wet AMD affects 10% of patients but this form of AMD causes greater vision loss.
- AMD is most common in people age 50 and older.
- People who smoke are at a higher risk for AMD.
- People with AMD may have trouble performing everyday tasks and their vision cannot be corrected with standard reading glasses.



Though many treatments are available for macular degeneration, regaining 20/20 vision is not always possible. What happens to these patients as they experience sight loss? Reading becomes difficult or impossible, which means they lose their ability to read their own mail, pay their bills, accurately read doses and warning labels on prescription bottles, grocery shop, or order from menus in restaurants without assistance. The right to drive their own car may be revoked. Falls become more frequent and eventually, living independently may become unsafe. Those who experience a loss of vision are also three times more likely to develop depression caused by their vision and losing their independence. ([NIH](#)) “For many years it was like I was suddenly shut out of a world I had known all my life” said Joan, diagnosed with glaucoma. “I was so depressed,” recalls Len after being diagnosed with cataracts.

How can these patients maintain their independence and positive outlook? There is a great need for optometrists, opticians, and other eye



Figure 1- Example of a portable video magnifier.

care professionals to work with these patients at the onset of vision loss. Starting at a seemingly insignificant vision loss of 20/40 or 20/50 will help your patients become familiar with what vision aids are available and comfortable in using them. Assistive aids for those with a vision loss may be as simple as an [optical magnifier](#), [portable video magnifier](#), filter lenses to reduce glare and improve contrast, or improved lighting around their home. As their vision begins to deteriorate adding high-tech assistive aids, such as [desktop video magnifiers and text-to-speech systems](#), will be a natural step in helping your patient remain independent.

“I feel normal because I can read the newspaper, I can read a book, I can read documents, I can read my checkbook balances. I can read the active ingredients in my medicine bottle without any difficulty. I think this machine is a godsend,” said Adeline, diagnosed with macular degeneration, regarding her Optelec ClearView+.

Len, quoted earlier, says of his Optelec desktop video magnifier:

“This machine has become my eyes. Not only have I continued painting and illustrating, but I’ve written a novel. After the pages come out of the printer, I use the video magnifier to review the text.”



Figure 2 - Example of a text-to-speech system.

The next step in patient care is to connect them with Vision Rehabilitation. As their vision becomes more severe, they will need to work with mobility specialists, occupational therapists, and others to learn to cope and adapt to their changing vision. Providing basic low vision services to your patients will not only provide them with the tools they need to remain independent and optimistic for their future but, as part of their vision rehab team, will also help you retain your patients.

ABOUT OPTelec

[Optelec](#)’s mission is simple: “Improving the quality of life of visually impaired and dyslexic people – reaching out with simple and effective solutions.” Our aim is to help anyone with a visual impairment, whether it be blindness, any degree of vision impairment or dyslexia, with simple to use and intuitive products. Our products are designed to help you lead an independent and full life: to allow you to stay in touch with those around you, to enable you to continue school or work and to help you continue doing your hobbies.

When medical treatments are fully exhausted, there are still many assistive products available that can help. These are the products that Optelec makes -with the hope of making a difference and improving the life of someone with a visual impairment. Because at Optelec we truly believe that “life is worth enjoying”!

Optelec offers OAC Members 50% OFF its Starter Kit. This starter Kit includes the most valuable and most requested products that help Eye Care Professionals to get started with Low Vision. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

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