

# Anti-VEGF Treatment for Wet Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Anti-VEGF treatment is a way to slow vision loss in people who have a condition known as “wet” age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

AMD is the leading cause of vision loss in people 50 years or older in the United States. This condition damages the **macula**, which is located in the center of the retina and enables you to see fine details clearly. You rely on your macula whenever you read, drive, or do other activities that require you to focus on precise details. A person with AMD loses the ability to perceive fine details both up close and at a distance. This vision loss usually affects only the central vision.

There are two types of AMD. About 90% of people with AMD have the

atrophic or “**dry**” form of AMD, which develops when the tissues of the macula grow thin with age. About 10% have the exudative or “**wet**” form of AMD. With wet AMD, abnormal blood vessels grow underneath the retina. These unhealthy vessels leak blood and fluid, which can scar the macula. Vision loss can be rapid and severe.

Researchers have found that a chemical called **vascular endothelial growth factor**, or **VEGF**, is critical in causing abnormal blood vessels to grow under the retina. Scientists have developed several new drugs that can block the trouble-causing VEGF. These are referred to as “anti-VEGF” drugs, and they help to block abnormal blood vessels, slow their

leakage, and reduce vision loss.

Treatment with the anti-VEGF drug is usually performed by injecting the medicine with a very fine needle into the back of your eye. Your ophthalmologist will clean your eye to prevent infection and will administer an anesthetic into your eye to reduce pain. Usually, patients receive multiple anti-VEGF injections over the course of many months. There is a small risk of complications with anti-VEGF treatment, usually resulting from the injection itself. However,

for most people, the benefits of this treatment outweigh the small risk of complications.

Anti-VEGF medications are a step forward in the treatment of wet AMD because they target the underlying cause of abnormal blood vessel growth. This treatment offers new hope to those affected with wet AMD. Although not every patient benefits from anti-VEGF treatment, a large majority of patients achieve stabilized vision, and a significant percentage can improve to some degree.

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Lawrence J. Singerman, MD  
Z. Nicholas Zakov, MD  
Joseph M. Coney, MD

Michael A. Novak, MD  
Scott D. Pendergast, MD

Hernando Zegarra, MD  
David G. Miller, MD  
Jerome P. Schartman, MD

3401 Enterprise Parkway #300  
Beachwood, OH 44122  
216-831-5700

14601 Detroit Avenue #200  
Lakewood, OH 44107  
216-221-2878

15299 Bagley Road #200  
Middleburg Hts, OH 44130  
440-663-0022

5390 Belmont Avenue  
Youngstown, OH 44505  
330-759-8777

1 Park West Boulevard #150  
Akron, OH 44320  
330-869-0738

3919 E. Market Street  
Warren, OH 44484  
330-856-2238

9485 Mentor Avenue #211  
Mentor, OH 44060  
440-205-4444

6100 S. Broadway Avenue #200  
Lorain, OH 44053  
440-233-6100