

EYE INJECTIONS FOR MACULAR DISEASE



**Macular
Disease
Foundation**
AUSTRALIA

Eye injections – also called intravitreal injections or IVI – are given to treat certain macular conditions, including neovascular age-related macular degeneration (AMD) or wet AMD, which is caused by abnormal blood vessel growth underneath the macula (which is the central part of the retina).

These new abnormal blood vessels are fragile and can leak fluid and blood, which may damage the macula.

The treatment involves an injection of medication (for example an anti VEGF medicine or a steroid) into the vitreous (which is the clear, jelly-like substance inside the eye).

The aim of eye injections is to stop the growth of abnormal blood vessels and fluid leakage.

Early action is crucial to saving your sight. The earlier treatment is started, the better the outcome.

Are eye injections effective?

Eye injections are not a cure, but repeated injections are effective at stabilising macular disease and maintaining your best vision for as long as possible.

Most people who receive eye injections maintain better vision for a longer time, compared with those who don't get treatment.

Macular conditions treated with eye injections include:

- wet (neovascular) age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- geographic atrophy (dry) AMD
- diabetic macular oedema (DMO)
- retinal vein occlusion (RVO) when it is associated with macular oedema
- myopic macular degeneration when it is associated with abnormal blood vessels
- any other macular condition that causes abnormal blood vessel formation and leakage of fluid under or in the retina.

If left untreated, these conditions can result in significant loss of central vision and even legal blindness.

What's involved?

The procedure is performed by an ophthalmologist. Local anaesthetic is applied to numb your eye, as well as antiseptic to prevent infection. Your eyelid will be kept open with a small instrument called an eyelid speculum. The medicine is then injected using a very fine needle.

You can expect minimal discomfort – injections should not be painful.

After your eye injection

There are no major restrictions after having an eye injection but you shouldn't drive on the day of your procedure. You also need to avoid getting any water into your eye for the first few days after your injection. Generally, there are no travel restrictions.

You should speak to your ophthalmologist about any specific instructions after receiving your injection.

Between injections you should monitor your vision every day using an Amsler grid.

If you notice any sudden changes in vision, you should contact your ophthalmologist as soon as possible.

How often will I need injections?

Usually, treatment begins with injections at monthly intervals. However your individual treatment cycle will be determined and adjusted by your ophthalmologist, depending on which treatment you are having, and how your macular condition responds to the injections.

Sometimes, the interval between injections can be extended. Treatment intervals between injections typically range from four (4) to twelve (12) weeks. Most patients will need to continue eye injections indefinitely to maintain vision and keep their disease stable.

Although repeated treatment can prove a burden for some people, you should never discontinue your treatment without the advice of your ophthalmologist, as this may lead to significant and irreversible damage to your macula and thus compromise your vision permanently, even to the point of legal blindness.



How much does it cost?

Individual treatment costs can vary. You can find more information about costs and rebates on our website at www.mdfoundation.com.au or by calling our National Helpline on **1800 111 709**.

When would eye injections not be given?

If you have an eye infection, either inside or around either eye, your ophthalmologist may decide not to give you an eye injection.

If you're pregnant, or trying to get pregnant, your ophthalmologist may also suspend treatment.

It's important to tell your ophthalmologist about your medical history, any conditions you have, what medications you're taking and whether you have any allergies to medications.

Are there side effects?

The following are not common but you may notice any of the following after an injection:

- sore eyes or a gritty sensation lasting for a few days after the injection
- small floaters in your vision, which might be seen for up to a few days after the injection
- redness (blood) on the white part of the eye (called the sclera) where the needle enters, which usually resolves within one to two weeks.



Are there any risks?

The following are very rare but the major risks of injecting medication into the eye include:

- increased pressure inside the eye
- inflammation inside the eye
- infection inside the eye
- bleeding inside the eye
- retinal tear or detachment.

Vision loss due to the treatment is very rare. Your ophthalmologist will discuss with you the risks and benefits of the treatment, provide instructions regarding after care, and answer any questions you may have about your treatment.

If after having an eye injection, your eyes become increasingly red, swollen, painful or sensitive to light, or if there are any sudden changes to your vision, contact your ophthalmologist as soon as possible.



Things to remember

- ☐ try not to miss your appointment with your ophthalmologist
- ☐ advise your ophthalmologist of any problems you experience after an injection
- ☐ continue to monitor your vision each day using an Amsler grid, one eye at a time
- ☐ immediately report any sudden changes in vision
- ☐ never discontinue your treatment without the advice of your ophthalmologist.

Join Eye Connect today

A macular disease diagnosis is not easy and there may be challenges ahead.

Macular Disease Foundation Australia's Eye Connect support service is free of charge, independent and endorsed by Australia's leading eye health professionals.

It offers tailored support and information that people living with AMD can access in between appointments with their eyecare professional.

Whether you prefer to receive assistance and resources online, in the post, or over the phone, Eye Connect has you covered.

Join Eye Connect via **www.mdfoundation.com.au/join-eye-connect** or call us on **1800 111 709**.

Need more information?

Learn more about macular disease at **www.mdfoundation.com.au**

You can also order information kits and Amsler grids by calling our National Helpline on **1800 111 709**.

We have a free newsletter and you can sign up to receive invitations to education sessions and events in your area.

Contact us today.

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