

Diseases and
Surgery of the
Retina and
Vitreous



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ANTIOXIDANTS and Age-Related Macular Degeneration

During a six-year, 11-center clinical trial of 3,640 participants aged 55 to 80 years old, researchers found that a combination of antioxidants prevented progression of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). In results for the Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS) (www.nei.nih.gov/amd), sponsored by the National Institutes of Health's National Eye Institute, it was found that high levels of Vitamins A (beta-carotene), C and E, as well as zinc and copper reduced the risk for advanced AMD by 25% in cases of intermediate AMD. It reduced the risk of vision loss by nearly 20%. It was not shown to reduce the risk of developing AMD if none or little was present at the beginning of the study, but longer follow-up might have shown a benefit. This supplement is not a cure for AMD, nor will it restore vision already lost by AMD.

The supplement used in the study had **500 mg of vitamin C, 400 IU of vitamin E, 15 mg (25,000 IU) of beta-carotene, 80 mg of zinc oxide, and 2 mg of copper oxide**. As a comparison, the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) is 90 mg/day for vitamin C, 15 IU of vitamin E, 0.9 mg/day of beta-carotene, 11 mg/day of zinc, and 0.9 mg/day of copper. Bausch and Lomb manufactured the formulation used in the study. It is available as **Ocuvite PreserVision**, over-the-counter for \$15-20 for a one-month supply. This should be taken 2 pills twice a day with meals (total of 4 pills a day). You can continue a regular multivitamin each day, but additional supplements of the included ingredients is not necessary.



The AREDS did not examine lutein or zeaxanthin. However, other studies suggest that **6 mg of lutein** reduces the risk of the wet form of AMD. This is available in Ocuvite Lutein, among other supplements. If you take lutein, it may interfere with the absorption of the beta-carotene. Lutein might be better taken at a separate time from beta-carotene.

There were only minor side effects from treatment. However, if you currently smoke or only recently quit, beta-carotene increases the risk of lung cancer. Smoking increases the risk of AMD. This is one more reason to stop smoking. If you smoke, you can take vitamins C, E, zinc, copper, and lutein.

For your convenience, we offer Ocuvite PreserVision for sale in the office. Ask the receptionist if you are interested.