

New Research On Preventing Vision Loss

(NAPSA)—Scientists looking for a way to improve eye health have made some interesting discoveries. Research has shown that vitamins and minerals (vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, zinc and copper) can reduce the risk of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) by 25 percent and of moderate vision loss by 19 percent.

The Age-Related Eye Disease Study 2 (AREDS2) study will add lutein, zeaxanthin and the omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA to determine if these nutrients decrease a person's risk of progression to AMD, which often leads to vision loss. Previous studies have suggested these nutrients may protect vision.

"Vision loss from AMD is an important public health issue. This study may help us find a better way to treat this devastating disease," said Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D., director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

AMD damages the macula. As the disease progresses, it blurs the patient's central vision. AMD can take two forms, wet and dry. Wet AMD is caused by the abnormal growth of blood vessels under the macula. This leads to rapid loss of central vision. Wet AMD is considered to be more severe than the dry form. Dry AMD, the more common form, occurs when the light-sensitive cells in the macula slowly break down. Untreated dry AMD can progress into wet AMD.

Paul A. Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Eye Institute (NEI) at NIH, said, "Nearly 2 million Americans have vision loss from advanced AMD, and another 7 million with AMD are



A new study is under way to discover if certain nutrients can decrease a person's risk of AMD, which can lead to vision loss.

at substantial risk for vision loss. In the study, we found a combination of vitamins and minerals that effectively slowed the progression of AMD for some people. Now, we will conduct this more precisely targeted study to see if the new combination of nutrients can reduce AMD progression even further."

Emily Y. Chew, M.D., study chair and deputy director of the Division of Epidemiology and Clinical Research at the NEI, said, "The AREDS2 study is seeking 4,000 people between 50 and 85 years of age with AMD in both eyes or advanced AMD in one eye. They must be available for yearly eye examinations for at least five years. Until we get the results from AREDS2, we encourage people with AMD to visit their eye care professional to see if they need to take the AREDS vitamin and mineral formulation. This alone could save more than 300,000 people from vision loss over the next five years."

For more information, visit www.nei.nih.gov/AREDS2 or call (877) AREDS-80 [(877) 273-3780].