

Sight Loss – Macular Degeneration

What is Macular Degeneration?

There are many forms of macular disease including genetic conditions which affect young people. When macular disease appears later in life, usually over the age of 55, it is called age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

How can the Shed support someone with macular degeneration?

There is no one solution that can possibly fit every situation, but this guidance offers some general ways in which Shed Leaders can support AMD sufferers.

- The important starting point must be to understand what the Shed member can see and what adaptations they need to be able to play a full and active part in Shed life. For example, good lighting can be of considerable benefit, if you have poor vision. As we get older, we all need more light to be able to see and by our 60s, it is estimated that we require 3x more than in our 20s.
- Shed Leaders need to consider if they can maximise the provision of natural light supplemented where necessary by supplementary lighting, but be aware, glare can cause considerable discomfort.
- Ensure that appropriate safety equipment is provided and worn.
- Shed Leaders need to be aware that sufferers from AMD may require emotional support to help overcome the “why me?” syndrome. Be aware of their personal feelings, yet don't be afraid to shy away from having a discussion. Sometimes, being diagnosed with AMD can catalyse a grieving process and sufferers can experience feelings of loss, denial, anger, and depression before acceptance.
- If practicable, link with another Shed work ‘buddy’ until the AMD sufferer is fully inducted to the Shed.
- Don't be afraid of letting the Shed member undertake tasks – they may or will know their own capabilities but let them know support is there if required; this will develop optimal confidence.
- Where warranted, give praise for a job well done as it will raise the AMD sufferer's self-esteem.

What are the effects of AMD on other members of the Shed?

Here are a few points which may help:

- Firstly, all Shed members need to be aware that sufferers of AMD may appear rude as they can walk past others without realising.
- Sufferers of AMD may have to give up driving because of sight loss.

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- Shed insurers need to be made fully aware that you have a member with AMD and give them an idea of what activities that member will be undertaking and if necessary, increase the level of cover.
- Ensure that there are tactile large print signs within the Shed that are displayed in a format that every Shed member can both see and understand.

Sources of Additional Help and Support

- There is a wealth of information on the Internet and the Macular Society <https://www.macularsociety.org/> provides help and advise on how to manage the condition and can suggest suppliers of equipment that will help an AMD sufferer.
- Contact your GP Surgery Social Prescriber as they will know what (if any) local support and funding may be available.