AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD)

- Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a disease that gradually destroys sharp, central vision, which is needed to see objects clearly and to perform common daily tasks such as reading and driving.

- It affects nearly 1.8 million Americans, with 500,000 new cases diagnosed each year. It is the leading cause of legal blindness in the U.S. in adults age 60 and older.

- AMD primarily affects the macula, the back central portion of the eye. The macula contains millions of light-sensitive cells that allow individuals to see fine detail. The retina instantly converts light, or an image, into electrical impulses, which are sent to the brain.

- AMD causes no pain, and in some cases, it advances so slowly that people notice little change in their vision. In others, the disease progresses faster and may lead to a loss of vision in both eyes.

- AMD occurs in two forms: wet and dry. The dry form is much more common. More than 85 percent of all people with intermediate and advanced AMD combined have the dry form. However, if only advanced AMD is considered, about two-thirds of patients have the wet form. Because almost all vision loss comes from advanced AMD, the wet form leads to significantly more vision loss than the dry form.

- A wide range of low-vision devices help patients live with advanced AMD. These include reading glasses with high-powered lenses, hand-held magnifiers, video magnifiers, computers with large-print and speech-output systems, large-print reading materials, and talking watches, clocks, and calculators.

Loss of central vision is a common problem in patients with advanced AMD.