



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA JOINS GLOBAL EFFORT TO ADDRESS
LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT
AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION**

*Regular Eye Exams Urged to Help Save Vision from the Leading Cause of
Blindness for People Age 50 and Older*

CHICAGO (Sept. 18, 2009) Though it is the leading cause of blindness in people over 50 and affects 25-30 million people in the western world, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) remains a condition that is often little understood by even those who are at high risk of developing the disease. In the United States, AMD affects more than 2 million people ages 50 and older.

"The situation is alarming," said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. "Too many people simply do not understand the risk factors that lead to AMD, as well as the preventive strategies that can be employed to halt or slow the advance of vision loss that occurs as a result of the disease."

"The most critical message is that everyone over the age of 50 must see an eye doctor on a regular basis, even if their vision seems perfect," said Wanda Hamilton, CEO of AMD Alliance International, in Toronto. "Early detection is the most important factor in preventing or slowing the advance of AMD."

In addition to regular eye exams, people can make changes to their nutrition and lifestyle to help prevent or slow macular degeneration:

Eat dark green, leafy vegetables - foods rich in vitamins C and E, selenium, and carotenoids (including beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin) - may delay or reduce the severity of AMD. Examples include arugula, broccoli, collard greens, kale, spinach and swiss chard.

Avoid foods that are high in fats and cholesterol, as these can lead to fatty deposits in the macular vessels which can hamper blood flow and increase the risk of AMD.

Eat fish regularly. New research suggests that Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish such as tuna and salmon may protect against the progression of AMD.

Include nuts and olive oil in your diet, as these also contain Omega-3 fatty acids and have shown to be protective.

Do not smoke. In addition to the role of diet, research has shown that AMD is two to three times more likely to occur among tobacco smokers; and, the risk is dose dependent. In other words, the more you smoke, the greater the risk and the faster the progression of the disease.

Understand your risk factors in terms of lifestyle and family history. There may be a genetic link in the occurrence of AMD. Other risk factors include age, exposure to sunlight, obesity, lack of exercise, and hypertension.

During AMD Week, September 19-27, 2009, Prevent Blindness America and AMD Alliance International are launching the distribution of a viral campaign with a test for AMD. The short video provides a quick and easy test for the early signs of macular degeneration.

http://www.testyourvisionforamd.com/preventblindness_test.php

“One must understand not only that AMD can be avoided by addressing risk factors such as diet, lifestyle and family history, but that even after the onset, the advance of blindness can be slowed,” Hamilton said. “These key pieces of knowledge can save the vision of millions of people, and that is what makes this campaign during AMD Week so critical.”

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, Prevent Blindness America is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call (800) 331-2020 or visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org.

About AMD Alliance International

AMD Alliance International is the only international organization in the world dedicated exclusively to promoting awareness, treatment and research into macular degeneration, the leading cause of vision loss in the developed world. With more than 60 organizational members in 25 countries, AMDAI is a membership organization comprised of the worlds' leaders in ophthalmology, vision, rehabilitation, research, and patient and senior's advocacy. For more information, visit www.amdalliance.org.

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