

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS & CAREGIVERS

# Vitamins & Supplements for Macular Degeneration

*What the AREDS2 research actually found, which nutrients matter most, and how to choose the right eye vitamin for your stage of AMD.*

## UNDERSTANDING THE CONDITION

# What Is Macular Degeneration?

- Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) damages the macula — the part of the retina responsible for sharp, central vision.
- It affects reading, driving, and recognizing faces, but usually spares side (peripheral) vision.
- Dry AMD is the most common form (about 85–90% of cases); wet AMD is less common but more sight-threatening.
- There is no cure, but nutrition is one of the few tools shown in large clinical trials to influence how AMD progresses.

### LEADING CAUSE

of vision loss in adults over 50 in the developed world

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**85–90%**

of AMD cases are the dry form

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*Central vision affected; peripheral vision usually preserved*

# The AREDS2 Breakthrough

Two landmark NIH-funded trials — AREDS (2001) and AREDS2 (2013) — remain the scientific foundation for every credible macular degeneration supplement on the market today.

1

2001

## AREDS

Found that a specific antioxidant + zinc formula reduced the risk of progression to advanced AMD by about 25% in people with intermediate or advanced disease.

2

2013

## AREDS2

Replaced beta-carotene (linked to lung cancer risk in smokers) with lutein and zeaxanthin, which performed as well or better without that risk.

3

Today

## Clinical Standard

The AREDS2 nutrient combination is the only over-the-counter formula proven in trials to help slow progression in intermediate-to-advanced AMD.

# The Six Nutrients Studied in AREDS2

Research-backed daily amounts used in the clinical trial formula:

| Nutrient        | AREDS2 Dose | Role in Eye Health                                                   |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lutein          | 10 mg       | Filters harmful blue light; a core building block of macular pigment |
| Zeaxanthin      | 2 mg        | Works alongside lutein to absorb light and protect the retina        |
| Vitamin C       | 500 mg      | Antioxidant that helps counter oxidative stress in the eye           |
| Vitamin E       | 400 IU      | Antioxidant that helps protect retinal cell membranes                |
| Zinc (as oxide) | 80 mg       | Helps transport vitamin A to the retina; original AREDS dose         |
| Copper          | 2 mg        | Added to offset the copper depletion caused by high-dose zinc        |

*Note: Beta-carotene, part of the original 2001 formula, was removed in AREDS2 because of a lung-cancer risk link in smokers — a reason to check what's actually in a formula before buying.*

# Why High-Dose Zinc Isn't Right for Everyone

Most drugstore "eye vitamins" use the full 80 mg AREDS zinc dose for everyone, on every bottle. But research has raised a concern: about **1 in 6 people** carry a genetic profile that may respond poorly to mega-dose zinc, and high doses can also cause stomach upset in some people regardless of genetics.

- The National Eye Institute (NEI) and American Academy of Ophthalmology guidelines note this isn't a one-size-fits-all decision.
- A simple cheek-swab genetic test can identify whether high-dose zinc is appropriate for a given person.
- Zinc-free and low-zinc AREDS2-style formulas exist for people who are sensitive or untested.

**1 in 6**

people carry a genetic profile linked to a poor response to high-dose zinc supplementation

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*Ask your eye doctor whether genetic testing is right for you before starting a mega-dose zinc formula.*

## HOW TO CHOOSE

# What Makes a Macular Degeneration Supplement the Right One for You



### Matches AREDS2 clinical doses

10 mg lutein, 2 mg zeaxanthin, and studied levels of vitamins C, E, and copper — not a proprietary "blend" that hides amounts.



### No unnecessary beta-carotene

AREDS2 replaced it for a reason; former smokers in particular should avoid it.



### Zinc dose matched to you

Full-dose, low-dose, or zinc-free options — ideally guided by your eye doctor or a genetic test.



### Includes meso-zeaxanthin

The third macular carotenoid, rarely present in standard formulas or the average diet.



### Clean label

Free of unnecessary fillers like animal-byproduct gelatin or synthetic surfactants.



### Third-party or professional oversight

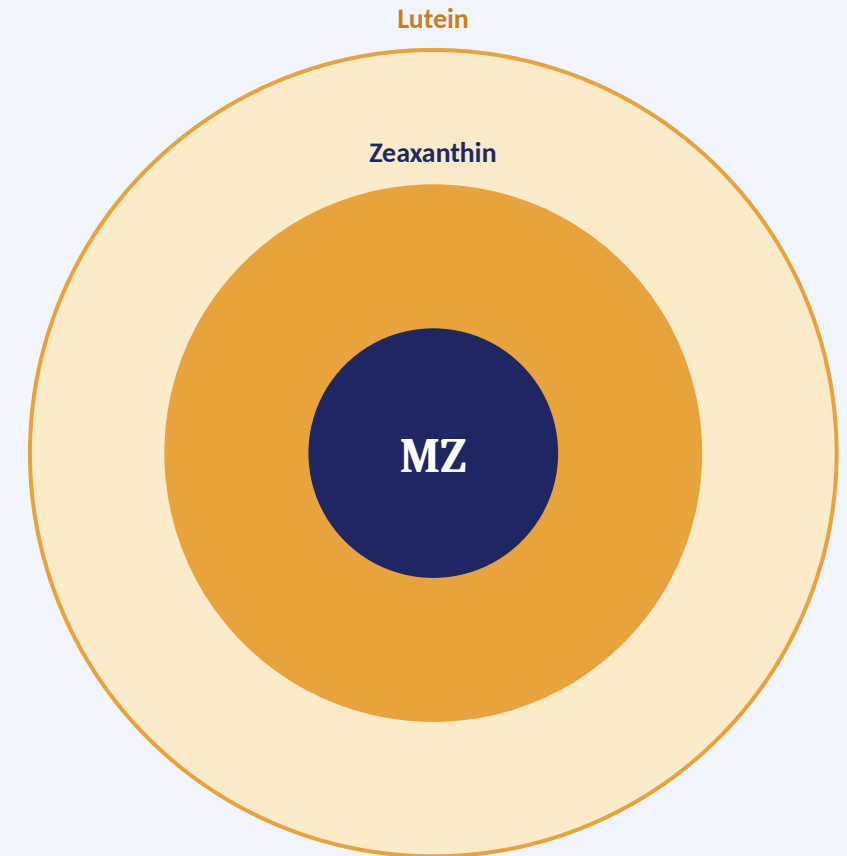
Formulas dispensed or recommended by eye care professionals, not just a drugstore shelf pick.

## THE OVERLOOKED CAROTENOID

# Meso-Zeaxanthin: The Missing Piece

Lutein and zeaxanthin get most of the attention — but they're only two of the **three carotenoids** that make up macular pigment, the eye's natural protective layer.

- Meso-zeaxanthin sits at the very center of the macula, where the eye needs protection most.
- Unlike lutein and zeaxanthin, it's scarce in commonly eaten foods, so diet alone rarely supplies enough.
- Standard drugstore AREDS2 formulas typically leave it out entirely.



*The Macular Pigment: Three Carotenoids, Working Together*

# Matching the Formula to Your Stage of AMD

*Not every eye is the same — and not every AMD supplement should be either.*

## Early Defense

*Triple-carotenoid formula*

### BEST FOR

For those concerned about aging, family history of AMD, or diabetic eyes

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*No high-dose zinc concern at this stage*

## Zinc-Free +MZ

*Antioxidants, no zinc*

### BEST FOR

For those sensitive to zinc, or with intermediate AMD and no genetic test on file

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*Not advised for early-stage AMD*

## Low-Zinc +MZ

*Reduced zinc (as gluconate)*

### BEST FOR

For intermediate AMD after genetic testing confirms zinc compatibility

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*Not advised for early-stage AMD*

## YOUR NEXT STEP

# Talk to Your Eye Doctor About The Right Formula for You

- 1 Ask for a comprehensive dilated eye exam to confirm your stage of AMD.
- 2 Discuss whether genetic zinc testing is appropriate before starting a mega-dose formula.
- 3 Choose an AREDS2-aligned formula matched to your stage — Early Defense, Zinc-Free +MZ, or Low-Zinc +MZ.

[visionelements.com/amd](https://visionelements.com/amd)

*Learn more about Vision Elements Early Defense, Zinc-Free +MZ, and Low-Zinc +MZ formulas, and find a provider near you.*

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