

Age-related
Macular
Degeneration
Patient Journey
Map





SpaMedica

Getting an appointment

We've put together a journey map for our patients to show the different stages from your initial eye check through to treatment and what you can expect at each stage. You may be right at the beginning of your journey and not been diagnosed yet or somewhere in the middle and wondering what comes next. We hope you find this useful and that it answers some of your questions – please call us 0330 058 4280 if you would like any more information about any of the stages or what to expect on your patient journey.

Getting a diagnosis - If you're experiencing any of these symptoms then you need to get your eyes checked as soon as possible by your local optician, who will examine your eyes and conduct a sight test to check the quality of your vision:

- Gaps or dark spots across your vision
- Words may become distorted or jumbled on a page
- Words may disappear when reading
- Straight lines, such as door frames, may appear distorted or bent
- Reduction in vision may be quick or happen over a number of years

The optician will be able to refer you to SpaMedica or another specialist, depending on what treatment you require.

GOOD TO KNOW...

Our SpaMedica Referrals Team calls within 24 hours of receiving a referral. We talk through the next steps, answer any questions and you can choose a suitable appointment date.

GOOD TO KNOW...

As an NHS patient you can choose where you get treated.

As you will know, as a previous cataract patient, you can choose the provider/hospital you would like to receive your treatment at. If you choose SpaMedica as your provider please let your optician know which of our hospitals is most convenient for you.



Getting a referral - If your optician suspects you have AMD they will place you through a 'rapid referral' process to attend a AMD assessment clinic. You will receive a call or letter with an appointment within two weeks.

We also provide a comprehensive patient information booklet on AMD, which includes what you can expect at each stage of your patient journey.



AMD assessment & diagnosis



If you come to SpaMedica for your assessment you can be reassured we will give you a warm welcome, guide you through the assessment and answer any questions you may have about AMD. We understand that you may be worried or stressed and our expert staff are on-hand to support you.

Your eyes will be dilated at this appointment – please note dilating the eyes causes blurred vision and sensitivity to light, so you won't be able to drive; so it's important to make sure you organise a lift or arrange transport to/from the hospital.

GOOD TO KNOW...

SpaMedica provides free transport for some patients, based on your location and other criteria – if you're struggling to find transport please speak to a member of our Referrals team to see if you qualify for free transport.



If you wear contact lenses these should not be worn at least 48 hours before your appointment – both eyes will be checked at your assessment.

Your assessment will consist of our team conducting a few tests as detailed below:

So what will happen at this appointment?

Welcome – You will be welcomed and signed in by one of our friendly reception team members and directed to the assessment clinic. You will be seated in our clinic reception and offered complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits.

Vision test – The first test we'll run through with you is a vision test, conducted by one of our friendly Healthcare Technicians (HCT) – this is a bit different to the ones you have at the opticians, as we use different charts.

Pupils dilated – The HCT will then place some eye drops in both eyes to dilate your pupils, this allows us to see the eyes more clearly. It usually takes about 20 to 30 minutes for your pupils to dilate and then we can examine your eyes. Dilating your pupils affects your vision and sensitivity to light for up to four hours, so you will not be able to drive yourself home after the appointment. And you will be offered complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits while we wait for your pupils to dilate.

Eye diagnostics – Once the pupils are dilated fully we'll call you through to the diagnostics room – where we take a magnified colour photo of your eyes and an imaging test that takes a cross-section image of your retina.

AMD assessment & diagnosis



Consent – The next stage of your assessment is to conduct a dye test to trace the blood vessels in your retina – this may be done on the same day or a separate appointment made. We will talk you through the process, answer your questions and make sure you understand the next steps. We'll check that you understand everything and ask you to sign a consent form, which lets us know you give your permission for the dye test to go ahead. Please let us know if you have a lasting power of attorney (LPA) or require support for giving consent.

Dye test – The dye is injected into your arm by one of our nurses, where the dye travels to and highlights the blood vessels in your eyes and any fluorescent patches showing can reveal if there is any leakage. A cannula needle will be placed in your arm and you will be asked to position your chin on a rest, similar to the ones in the opticians. The dye will then be pushed through the cannula into your arm – you will usually experience a cold sensation in the arm as the dye is injected. A specialist eye photographer will take photos of your eyes while the dye is still present. One of our nurses will be with you throughout the process to talk through what's happening and support you. The nurse will remove the cannula once the photos have been taken.

All done – that's the end of your assessment. The photos and results of your tests will be sent to a consultant ophthalmologist to review.

Your diagnosis -The consultant ophthalmologist will receive the results and photos from your tests and review these. They will provide a diagnosis and recommend any appropriate treatment.

You will receive a letter or call to let you know what the diagnosis is and, if AMD is confirmed, you will be informed of next steps.

If your AMD can be treated you will be booked into an AMD Clinic to begin your treatment course. The treatment course starts with attending a clinic and receiving treatment once a month for three months. You will then have an eye check and an individual treatment schedule put together – this varies for each person.



GOOD TO KNOW...

It is normal to feel anxious about your treatment and we are here to help. Please contact us if you have any questions. We have a friendly team of experts who are here to make you as comfortable as possible. ★

We will discuss the next steps of the AMD treatment with you, what your treatment involves and answer any questions you may have. If you are happy to go ahead with the treatment course then we will ask you to sign a consent form. Please let us know if you have a lasting power of attorney (LPA) or require support for giving consent.

Each of your AMD Clinic visits will consist of a vision test and scan to check your eyes and treatment will be an injection in the eye (using a very small needle) using a specially formulated drug (called Anti-VEGF), which helps to reduce any further leakage from the abnormal vessels.

It is important to attend each of your appointments as close to the schedule as possible. You will need to rearrange your appointment if you have an infection or experiencing other symptoms – please call us before your appointment to discuss and change date, if required. The new appointment date should be as soon as possible to keep your treatment on track.

Advice and recommendations for your AMD Clinic

The time given for your appointment is the time you should arrive at the hospital and NOT the time of your treatment – arriving earlier will mean a longer wait for you

Please arrange transport to and from the hospital – your eyes will be dilated for treatment and this causes blurred vision and sensitivity to light, so you won't be able to drive; so it's important to make sure you organise a lift or arrange transport. SpaMedica provides free transport for some patients, based on your location and other criteria – if you're struggling to find transport please speak to a member of our Referrals team to see if you qualify for free transport.

We recommend eating a light meal before you arrive at the hospital.

Please take all your medications as normal, unless we have specifically advised you not to.

You should wear comfortable and loose fitting clothing – you will not need to wear a hospital gown.

We recommend you wear dark coloured clothing – we use iodine during treatment and this can stain lighter clothing.

Remove all make-up before arriving at the hospital.





We've put together the following detailed steps you'll go through when you attend your AMD Clinic to help put your mind at ease. Hundreds of thousands of people receive this treatment every month and you'll meet some of our 'veteran AMD' patients who will be able to give you some 'first-hand' reassurance.

Three sets of drops

Anaesthetic drops – So one of the most important things is to make sure your experience is pain-free and we do this by putting some anaesthetic drops in your eyes (we put this in both eyes and we'll explain why later).

Dilating drops – the next set of drops we put in your eyes are to dilate your pupil in the eye we are treating.

Cleaning drops – the third set of drops are used to help clean the eye. These are iodine drops and can sting if used without anaesthetic drops, so this is why we put anaesthetic drops in both eyes – just in case any small drips get in the other eye.

Reclining – we ask you get comfortable in our reclining chair and we will recline you to get you as flat as possible.

Cleaning – we will then clean the area around the eye and lashes.

Eye cover – a small cover will be placed around the eye to ensure the area is kept as sterile as possible.

Keeping your eye open – a small clamp is used to keep your eye open, so you don't have to worry about blinking.

Measuring your eye – we take a measurement of the eye before treatment using a small hand tool – this lightly touches the eye and it is normal to feel a light pressure while this is being done.

Cleaning drops – we'll put some more cleaning drops in your eye – there's no such thing as too clean...

Injection – the consultant or nurse will let you know how to position your eye and where to look to ensure you don't see the needle coming towards the eye. The needle used is not the ones you've probably seen for injections in the arm or taking blood tests, it's much, much smaller. So if you're picturing a huge needle go and get a ruler or tape measure and look how small 12mm (1/2 inch) is – that is the length of the needle and it is extremely fine – the diameter is 0.3mm (or 0.01 inches). And the amount being injected is very small too – it's 0.05ml, so only takes a couple of seconds. A cotton pad will be placed on the eye straight away and antibiotic drops added to the eye.

Simple vision test – we conduct a simple vision test – 'how many fingers am I holding up' to check OK.

Sit back up and relax – we'll bring you up to a sitting position and you can now relax – it's all done.

Check next appointment – we'll check the date of your next AMD Clinic appointment and confirm that's OK.





Time to go home – we'll call the contact you gave us to organise a lift home, if they're not already waiting for you in the reception area. If you have organised a lift on our SpaMedica bus, you'll be booked in with the driver, who will come and get you when the bus is ready to go.

Your personalised schedule

You will initially attend three consecutive monthly AMD clinics for eye checks and treatment. You will then receive a personalised schedule with the frequency of visits confirmed. It is usual in the first 12 months of treatment to attend seven clinics – three in the first three consecutive months and then one clinic every other month, totalling four more.

These are booked well in advance and you are recommended to keep to as close to your booked schedule as possible. Please contact us if you need to change any of your confirmed clinic dates.

GOOD TO KNOW...

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E: clinic@spamedica.co.uk
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Contact SpaMedica if you have any concerns or queries relating to your eye.

This number is available 24 hours per day, 365 days of the year for emergencies, and from 9am - 5pm for general enquiries.

