

Don't Let AMD Stop You Flying High

About [250,000 Kiwis are now celebrating their 60th](#) birthday across the country. This means more older people than ever before look forward to enjoying a long, healthy and active retirement. In fact, many have begun to use their new-found free time to enjoy gliding, and experience the exhilaration of soaring high in the sky. Almost anyone can train to fly a glider at one of the country's 22 gliding clubs. But what happens if your health changes as you get older? What if your vision begins to deteriorate? Conditions like age-related macular degeneration (AMD) can have a significant impact on a person's life and in severe cases stop them from being able to drive a car, or even fly a glider. That's why it's important to look after yourself and do all you can to stop your eyesight from deteriorating.

What is AMD?

In severe cases, AMD has been attributed to about [5% of sight loss around the world](#) and by 2020, it's expected to affect 196 million people. It's an eye condition that's also the leading cause of vision loss for people over 50. [AMD damages the macula](#) - the small area near the middle of the retina. This is the part of the eye that we need for sharp, central vision and which let us see objects straight ahead. It doesn't necessarily lead to complete blindness; however, it can stop you from doing the everyday tasks that you've always enjoyed, including gliding.

Preventing AMD

Macular degeneration doesn't have to just be an inevitability of getting older, there are steps you can take towards preventing the condition from developing, including:

- Do not smoke.
- Eat a healthy diet which includes leafy vegetables and fish.
- Get regular exercise and try to stay as active as possible.
- Wear sunglasses which provide 100% protection from UV-A and UV-B light.
- Have a regular eye examination with an eyecare specialist, especially if there is history of AMD in your family. The New Zealand Association of Optometrists recommends regular eye checks, as early detection of an eye condition can [help prevent serious damage](#).

Gliding as you get older

Age shouldn't stop you from learning to fly or continuing your gliding hobby. After all, some people have learned to fly well into their 80s. Generally speaking, if you are able to drive a car you should have no trouble flying. But you do need to have reasonable health with acceptable eyesight. That's why it's important to look after your health, so you can still enjoy the things you love.

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