

What Are Drusen?

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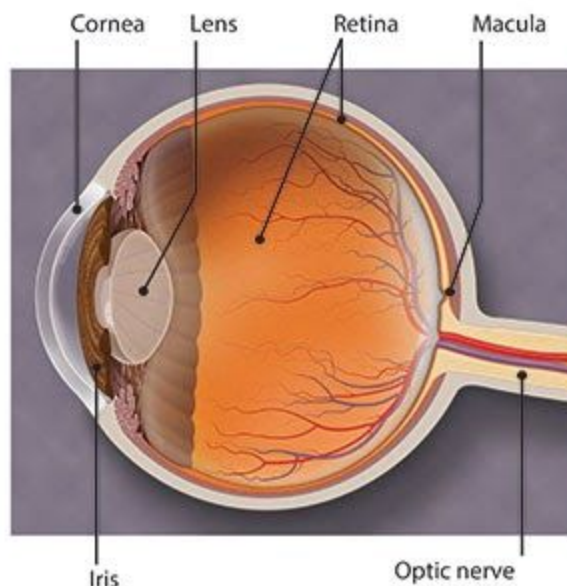
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Drusen are yellow deposits under the [retina](#). Drusen are made up of lipids and proteins. Drusen likely do not cause [age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\)](#). But having drusen increases a person's risk of developing AMD. There are different kinds of drusen. Small drusen may not cause vision problems for a long time, if at all. Larger drusen increase the risk for advanced AMD, which can result in vision loss.

Drusen of the optic nerve Drusen can also occur in the [optic nerve](#). These drusen are made up of protein and calcium salts and generally appear in both eyes. Unlike the drusen associated with AMD, optic nerve drusen (also known as optic disc drusen) are not related to aging and often appear in children. Optic nerve drusen usually do not affect vision, but some patients with these drusen may lose peripheral (side) vision



[Drusen occur naturally with age](#). The exact relationship between degenerative macular disease and drusen is not clear. However, having large drusen is a sign of [AMD](#).

Drusen symptoms

Most people with drusen do not have any symptoms. Often, a [routine eye exam](#) will incidentally reveal their presence. Small drusen are not a symptom of eye disease. However, the presence of a large number of large drusen is an early sign of [dry age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\)](#). The [symptoms of AMD](#) include hazy vision, difficulty seeing when going from bright light to low light, and a blank or blurry spot in your central vision.

Optic nerve drusen also often do not produce symptoms. However, some patients with optic nerve drusen experience vision problems, including loss of peripheral (side) vision and temporary flickering or graying out of their vision.

Drusen are typically a result of aging and are commonly found in people age 60 and older. Caucasians are more likely to develop drusen, as well as [age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\)](#). Large drusen are associated with AMD. [Risk factors for AMD](#) include a family history of the disease, smoking and abnormal cholesterol levels.

The risk of developing optic nerve drusen is also increased for people who are of Caucasian descent or who have a family history of the disease.

[Drusen](#) are detected during a dilated eye exam. To check your eyes, your [ophthalmologist](#) will dilate (widen) your pupils using [dilating eyedrops](#) and examine your eyes with an ophthalmoscope, a device that allows him or her to see the [retina](#) and other areas at the back of the eye. This examination will allow him or her to see if drusen are present.

If your ophthalmologist detects large drusen, he or she may have you use an [Amsler grid](#) to check for [macular degeneration symptoms](#) such as wavy, blurry or dark areas in your vision. If your ophthalmologist thinks you have optic nerve drusen, he or she may order additional imaging tests to confirm the diagnosis.

Small drusen do not need to be treated. If your [ophthalmologist](#) finds small drusen during a routine eye exam, he or she may want to watch them regularly to make sure they do not develop into large drusen.

Because large drusen are a sign of [age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\)](#), your ophthalmologist will follow the [AMD treatment](#) appropriate for you. Trying to eliminate the drusen will not improve your AMD.

If you have optic nerve drusen without symptoms, you should be monitored regularly. There is no treatment for optic nerve drusen. In rare cases where [choroidal neovascular membranes](#) develop, treatment may be appropriate.

Sources: <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-are-drusen>

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/drusen-causes>

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/drusen-risk>

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/drusen-treatment>

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