



Stargardt – Risk Factors

Fundus Flavimaculatus

Stargardt disease, also known as fundus flavimaculatus, is usually diagnosed in individuals under the age of 20 when decreased central vision is first noticed. On examination, the retina of an affected individual shows a macular lesion surrounded by yellow-white flecks, or spots, with irregular shapes. The retina consists of layers of light-sensing cells that line the inner back wall of the eye and are important in normal vision. The macula is found in the center of the retina and is responsible for the fine, detailed central vision used in reading and color vision.

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Stargardt disease, an early-onset form of macular degeneration, is an inherited disease. The condition is programmed into your cells at conception. It is not caused by injury, infection or exposure to a toxic agent. Because Stargardt disease is an inherited condition, there is nothing that can be done to reduce the risk of developing the disease.

However, recent findings in rodent models of Stargardt disease find that unprotected, prolonged exposure to light can accelerate vision loss. Therefore, The Foundation Fighting Blindness strongly recommends that patients with Stargardt wear brimmed hats or visors and sunglasses when outdoors.

Stargardt disease is an autosomal recessive disease. In autosomal recessive diseases, unaffected parents, who are carriers, have one gene with a disease-causing mutation paired with one normal gene. Each of their children then has a 25 percent chance (or 1 chance in 4) of inheriting the two diseased genes (one from each parent) needed to cause the disorder. Carriers are unaffected because they have only one copy of the gene.