

“How I saved my sight”

After being struck down with an age-related eye condition, Norah Norton, 65, feared she would go blind, until she discovered marigolds...



By Claire Williams

For keen gardener Norah Norton, there was no better way to spend an afternoon than tending her precious plants in the garden. Gardening was her one big passion in life, her pride and joy, and although she had been experiencing problems with her eyesight, she was determined not to let it stop her doing what she loved most.

Then one day, after weeding, Norah noticed she'd accidentally pulled out some small seedlings by mistake. Her failing eyesight meant she'd also become more clumsy in the garden, and had begun to trample over young plants. She sank to her knees with the awful realisation she would have to give up her beloved hobby.

Norah first noticed problems with her vision at the beginning of 2007. “The only way I can

describe it is that it seemed as though I had a permanent black disc in my eye,” says Norah. “At first I thought it might be something temporary as I'd had flu but once the virus had passed, my sight remained bad.”

As Norah's eyesight gradually got worse it began to impact on her daily life. “My night vision had completely gone. If I went out in the garden at night I couldn't even see the shed. I had to stop driving at night because the lights seemed to bleed into each other. Even in the day I couldn't read the big white stop sign on the road properly.”

As a semi-retired exhibition curator, part of Norah's job involved proof reading, but her sight had deteriorated to such a degree she couldn't see the print.

Norah's GP diagnosed dry, age-related macular degeneration – AMD. “I was devastated and my immediate thought was that I

didn't want to become a burden to my two children who were still at college at the time.

“The doctor told me I should prepare to move back to the city in the next few years, as he didn't think I'd be able to cope. I'd moved to the country because I wanted to return the area where I'd grown up and the thought of having to give it all up was heartbreaking.”

Norah's doctor told her that although her sight would never completely go, she would still be left functionally blind. “I just assumed that was it, there was nothing I could do – I'd just have to put up with it,” says Norah.

But then Norah heard a macular specialist on the radio talking about a trial test of a

‘I assumed that was it, there was nothing I could do’

AMD: THE FACTS

❖ What is it?

The macula is the part of the eye that allows you to see fine detail. AMD gradually destroys a sufferer's sharp central vision. There are two types: **Dry AMD** happens when light-sensitive cells in the macula slowly break down and sufferers experience a gradual loss of central vision and a fading of colours. It's the most common cause of blindness in the over-60s.

Wet AMD results in new blood vessels growing behind the retina. This causes bleeding and scarring, which can lead to sight loss. Wet AMD can develop quickly and sometimes responds to treatment in the early stages. It accounts for about 10 per cent of all people with AMD.

❖ What are the symptoms?

Fuzzy or blurry vision, an empty or dark area in the centre of your vision, straight lines appearing curved or wavy, and a dimming of vision when reading.

❖ Is there a cure?

There is currently no cure for dry AMD. Studies have shown that the use of specific vitamin supplements help to reduce the rate the condition progresses. Again, there is no proven cure for wet AMD, but certain treatments including laser surgery, photodynamic therapy and certain medicines.

❖ Can I prevent it?

You can reduce your chances of developing AMD by not smoking, wearing sunglasses, and eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and veg. Having regular eye tests can lead to early diagnosis of conditions such as AMD, when treatment may be more useful. Adults should have an eye examination every two years.

❖ **For information contact** The Macular Disease Society 0845 241 2041; www.macular-disease.org or the RNIB 0303 123 9999 www.rnib.org.uk

supplement called MacuShield. The supplement contains lutein, found in spinach, and zeaxanthin, the yellow pigment found in corn. It also contains meso-zeaxanthin, derived from marigolds, which is believed to be most effective when treating AMD.

“Apparently it had been trialled by people with AMD who reported that not only was the supplement slowing the progression of the disease but in some cases was also helping to improve it,” says Norah, who was encouraged to visit a macular specialist herself.

“I started taking the supplement and within six months I began to notice a difference,” says Norah. “Before taking MacuShield I almost became a recluse because I couldn't drive anywhere to see my family or friends. Now I can work again, too, because I'm able to read text and best of all I'm back



in the garden doing what I love.”

Norah's left eye used to be worse than her right, but now the sight in her right eye is perfect and the sight in her left has greatly improved, though distorted.

“I really would recommend MacuShield to anyone who has even the beginnings of AMD,” says Norah. “It's worked wonders for me and certainly nowadays I wouldn't consider myself visually impaired anymore.”

Help maintain eye health with MacuShield

Special offer for all Yours readers

Now you've read Norah's amazing story why not see if MacuShield can help you? MacuShield dietary supplements are rich in lutein, zeaxanthin and meso-zeaxanthin which together help maintain healthy eyes. The one-a-day soft gel capsule is also suitable for those individuals who are concerned about age-related changes to their sight and are looking for a food supplement to help preserve and maintain eye health into later years.



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