



WHAT IS THE RETINA?

The retina is a thin layer of tissue which lines the inside of the eye. Like the film in a camera, the retina senses the light which enters the eye, and translates the images into electrical signals which are then telegraphed to the brain (via the optic nerve). The retina is one of the most delicate and complex organs of our bodies, and currently it cannot be replenished or transplanted if it is damaged.

What is the macula?

The macula is a specific area of the retina. It is at the center of the visual field—when looking directly at an object, you are seeing it with the macula, while the rest of the retina is involved with peripheral vision. Although it represents only a small fraction of the total size of the retina—about the size of the capital letter “O” on this page—the macula is crucial for visually demanding tasks like reading, driving a car, and color vision. Diseases of the macula may interfere with “detail vision”, making these activities more difficult. Macular problems can also cause images to appear distorted, or may cause an area of cloudiness or darkness to form at the center of the visual field. Fortunately, many diseases which affect the tiny macula may spare the rest of the retina, thereby preserving peripheral vision. Therefore, diseases such as Age Related Macular Degeneration rarely result in complete loss of sight.