

Can Your Diet Save Your Sight?

There have been hundreds of studies in recent years investigating the role of nutrition in eye health.

Some health concerns include:

- Cataracts, which is a clouding of the lens that can be corrected with outpatient surgery.
- AMD – Age related macular degeneration – is a leading cause of blindness among older people.
- Malnutrition – a shortage of vitamin A causes night blindness and other problems.
- Vitamin deficiencies

Research about Eye Health and Nutrients:

Certain nutrients appear to play a role in preventing—or at least delaying—AMD (Age related macular degeneration) and possibly cataracts according to research studies.

The list includes:

- Lutein and zeaxanthin.
- Vitamin C and E, selenium, beta carotene and other antioxidants.
- Zinc from food
- Omega-3 fats.
- Herbal supplements, no convincing evidence that any herb or eye supplement can keep your eyes healthy

Protect your Eyes

Eating a diet low in fat and rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains can pay benefits not only to your heart but to your eyes. Your eyes rely on tiny arteries for oxygen and nutrients, just as the heart relies on much larger arteries. Keeping those arteries healthy will help your eyes. Research suggests that a healthy diet can protect against eye disorders.

What are Good Practices?

Emphasize colorful fruits and vegetables. Some suggestions include leafy greens such as chard, blueberries, blackberries, beets, broccoli and carrots. Colorful foods—deep green, orange, yellow, purple, red, blue—contain the most carotenoids and other healthy pigments.

Leafy green vegetables. Kale, spinach, romaine lettuce, collards, turnip greens, broccoli and peas. And while not leafy and green, eggs are also a good source of these nutrients.

Orange-colored vegetables and fruits. Carrots are high in beta-carotene, a nutrient that helps with night vision, as are other orange-colored fruits and vegetables like sweet potatoes, apricots, cantaloupe, oranges, tangerines, grapefruit and lemons. Making them a part of a colorful diet can help you keep your eyes healthy. Research indicates that your eyes need relatively high levels of vitamin C to function properly. Enjoy some peaches, red peppers, tomatoes, and strawberries.

Beans. All kinds of beans (legumes), including black-eyed peas, kidney beans and lima beans, contain zinc, an essential trace mineral that is found in high concentration in the eyes. Zinc may help protect your eyes from the damaging effects of light. Did you know that peanuts are a legume too? Other foods high in zinc include oysters, lean red meat, poultry and fortified cereals.

Get more zinc: Some other good choices include: meat, seafood like oysters, and liver are the richest sources. Brewer's yeast, milk and other dairy products, wheat germ, and whole grains also supply some zinc.

Healthy fats, as in fish and nuts, Research shows that diets rich in omega-3 fatty acid from cold-water fish may help reduce the risk of developing eye disease later in life. These fish include: salmon, tuna, sardines, and halibut.

Be Kind to your eyes:

- Stay away from smoky rooms. Smoking endangers your eyes.
- Avoid strong sunlight; it may help reduce the risk of cataracts.
- Get regular eye exams—once every three to five years starting at age 39, more often as you get older, depending on your health and on professional advice.

Remember good nutrition at all ages is vital for your entire body and plays an important role in maintaining healthy eyes. Talk with your ophthalmologist about any concerns you have about your eye health.

For More Information See these sources:

<http://www.berkeleywellness.com/healthy-eating/nutrition/article/can-your-diet-save-your-sight>

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/diet-nutrition>

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/>

<https://hnrca.tufts.edu/page/2/?s=Research+results+vision+and+foods&op=Search>

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

The Academy's EyeSmart website provides ophthalmologist-reviewed information about eye diseases and treatments, eye health news and tips for a lifetime of good eye health.

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/five-fabulous-foods-your-eyes>