



Save Your Vision Month

Clinical Research shows strong correlation between good nutrition and the prevention of age-related eye diseases.

Everyone's heard the saying "you are what you eat." Well, it's true for your eyes as well as for your heart, bones and teeth. During March's Save Your Vision Month, the American Optometric Association (AOA) reminds Americans that caring for eyes includes looking carefully at what you eat.

Six nutrients - antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin, essential fatty acids, vitamins C and E and the mineral zinc - have been identified as helping to protect eye sight and promote eye health. Since the body doesn't make these nutrients naturally, it's important that they are incorporated into a daily diet and, in some cases, supplemented with eye vitamins.

"More than two decades of extensive research have provided a better understanding of how diet and nutrition can not only keep our eyes healthy, but reduce the risk of certain eye diseases as we age," said Ronald L. Hopping, O.D., MPH, president of the AOA. "From dry eye to age-related eye diseases, research shows that nutrition plays a critical role in maintaining the health of our eyes."

Key Eye Nutrients in Fruits and Vegetables

The AOA recommends eating a diet with a variety of foods loaded with key nutrients, such as lutein and zeaxanthin, for maintaining and improving eye health.

The AOA's American Eye-Q® survey showed that nearly half of all Americans (49 percent) still believe carrots are the best food for eye health. While carrots do contain nutritional value by supplying beta-carotene, which is essential for night vision, spinach and other dark, leafy greens are the healthiest foods for eyes because they naturally contain large amounts of lutein and zeaxanthin.

"Nutrition is a component of health for the entire body, including the eyes," said Dr. Hopping. "I frequently encourage my patients to make small dietary changes in order to experience a big impact with vision."

The AOA recommends the following foods which contain key nutrients for eye health:

- **Lutein and zeaxanthin:** To help reduce your risk of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), eat one cup of colorful fruits and vegetables such as broccoli, spinach, kale, corn, green beans, peas, oranges and tangerines four times a week.
- **Essential fatty acids:** Studies suggest omega-3 fatty acids such as flax oil or fleshy fish like tuna, salmon, or herring, whole grain foods, lean meats and eggs may help protect against AMD and dry eye.
- **Vitamin C:** Fruits and vegetables, including oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, papaya, green peppers and tomatoes, can help minimize the risk of cataracts and AMD.
- **Vitamin E:** Vegetable oils, such as safflower or corn oil, almonds, pecans, sweet potatoes, and sunflower seeds are powerful antioxidants that can slow the progression of AMD and cataract formation.
- **Zinc:** A deficiency of zinc can result in poor night vision and lead to cataracts; therefore, consuming red meat, poultry, liver, shellfish, milk, baked beans, and whole grains on a daily basis is important.

By: American Optometric Association

Recipe of the Month

Spinach Berry Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients:

4 packed cups torn fresh spinach
1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
1 cup fresh, or frozen, blueberries
1 small sweet onion, sliced
1/4 cup chopped pecans, toasted
Salad Dressing
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar, or
cider vinegar
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons honey
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon curry powder
1/8 teaspoon pepper



Directions:

In a large salad bowl, toss together spinach, strawberries, blueberries, onion and pecans. In a jar with a tight fitting lid, combine dressing ingredients. Shake well. Pour over salad and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information:

Calories 158, Total Fat 5g, Cholesterol 0mg, Total Carbs 25g, Dietary fiber 4g, Protein 4g