



Eat better to see better

BALANCED DIET A diet high in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fats, trans-fats and sugar **will not only help your eyes** but also improve your health

Good nutrition is very important for both your general and eye health. Good nutrition helps our body to grow, repairs wear and tear, protects against infection and helps it function properly. Increasingly, researchers are finding a link between good nutrition and maintaining healthy eyes. Researchers now believe that age-related eye diseases that are caused by the body's exposure to the normal oxidation process may be slowed by vitamins and minerals found in fruits and vegetables.

What is oxidative damage?

Our eye works like a camera. It has a lens which focuses the light coming into our eyes to the retina, which is the film. Retina has cells which converts light rays into electrical impulses and are transmitted to the brain for decoding and image formation.

Red, blue, green, yellow and ultraviolet (UV) wavelengths in natural sunlight penetrate the transparent lens. But UV light appears to be particularly damaging to the lens of our eye and blue light appears to damage the retina. Normal byproducts of metabolism, called oxygen free radicals, also cause damage. If not neutralised by an antioxidant, over time such oxidation damages the lipids, proteins and other components of the lens. The result is a clouding of the lens in a gradual slide from transparent to opaque. These opacities are called cataracts. Similarly in the retina, oxidative damage leads to a condition called Macular Degeneration. The retinal cells undergo oxidative damage leading to death of the cells and loss of the central part of our vision and even blindness.

Antioxidants are compounds in foods that help maintain healthy cells and tissues in the eye and in other organs. Inside the lens are high levels of vitamins C and E as well as some lutein and zeaxanthin. The

latter two fall within a class of phytochemicals and they are concentrated in the retina. Researchers have found increasing the intake of these compounds in our diet may prevent or at least delay the onset of cataract and macular degeneration.

Vitamin A

We all remember our mothers telling us to eat our carrots. Carrots contain a carotenoid called beta-carotene. Our body converts beta-carotene into vitamin A which is an antioxidant. Antioxidants such as vitamin A are essential for eye health.

Carotenoids are pigments in plants and animals. Beta-carotene is a carotenoid. It is contained in carrots and other various food sources. Vitamin A is an antioxidant that is very important to the health of the eyes. Vitamin A...

- helps your eyes adjust to light changes
- moistens the eyes and thus enhances visual acuity
- has been shown to prevent the forming of cataracts
- has been shown to help prevent blindness from macular degeneration

Lutein

Lutein is another carotenoid, which the body turns into an antioxidant. Lutein is the primary carotenoid located in the centre of the retina, called the macula. Six mg of lutein has been shown to reduce the risk of macular degeneration by nearly 57 per cent. A similar study showed that a diet low in lutein greatly increased the chance of developing cataracts. It benefits the overall health of the eye and has even been linked to reducing the hardening and narrowing of arteries. Lutein is found in food sources such as spinach, broccoli and peas.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C has been linked to the prevention

of cataracts and delaying the onset of macular degeneration. Besides Vitamin C helps in fighting infections and has a host of other benefits.

The recommended daily allowance for vitamin C is 60 mg for both men and women. It does not stay in the body very long so it needs to be constantly replenished to obtain the benefits. One orange contains about 70 mg of vitamin C.

Vitamins A, C & E can be found in many different sources of fruit and vegetables such as: oranges, grapes, dried apricots, tomatoes, peppers, raw carrots, green leafy vegetables including kale and spinach, green peas, french beans etc. They can also be found in nuts, seeds, dairy products and eggs. While vitamins can be obtained by taking supplements, it is best to get as many of these nutrients as possible through your diet. A diet high in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fat, trans-fats and sugar will help not only your eyes but also your overall health.

Although increasing your intake of antioxidants will probably not restore vision that is already lost, it may slow the progress of the disease. Smoking is thought to be a significant risk factor in eye health. Studies show that quitting smoking can have significant benefits at any age. Nutrition and health are lifelong concerns. Don't wait until you develop an eye problem to make changes in your diet.

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