



DIETETICS

Healthy eating for eye health

By Kaylie Cochrane, OSCAR Care Group Dietitian

Eating a balanced diet is important for many functions in the body, but did you know that **good nutrition can promote eye health as well as prevent a number of eye diseases?**

Many people wait until their eyesight deteriorates to start making necessary changes to their diet. Ensuring you add a few key nutrients to your diet can help prevent problems before the disease develops.

Some common eye diseases which good nutrition can prevent include:

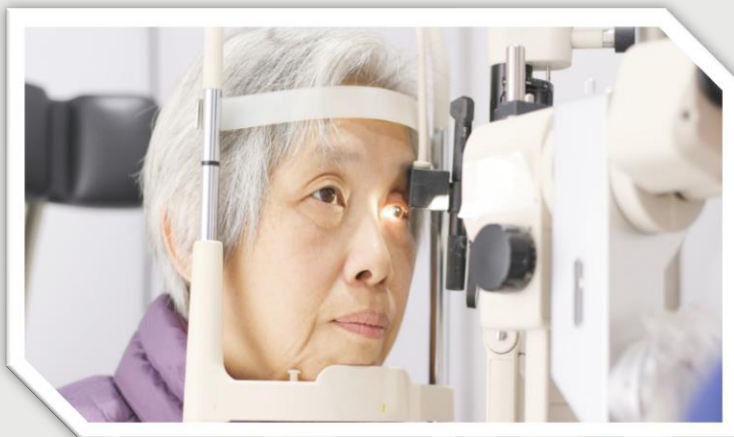
- Diabetic retinopathy
- Macular degeneration
- Retinal vein occlusion
- Cataracts
- Retinitis pigmentosa
- Cone rod dystrophies
- Dry eye



Who is at risk of developing these eye diseases?

You are at greater risk of developing eye diseases if you:

- Have a family member with macular degeneration
- Have been diagnosed with diabetes
- Smoke
- Are Physically inactive
- Have a family history of retinitis pigmentosa
- Are elderly



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Foods you should be eating for heathy eyes

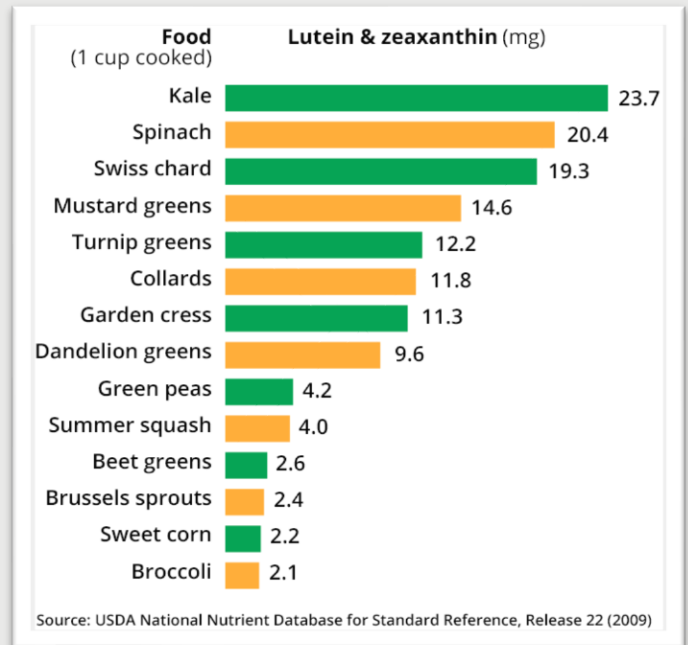
Lutein and zeaxanthin are antioxidants found in the eye. These are carotenoids, carotenoids are the pigments that are responsible for red yellow and orange colours in many fruits and vegetables and are used by the body to make Vitamin A. Lutein and zeaxanthin are not produced in the body, you must obtain these antioxidants from your diet.

A study published in the Archives of Ophthalmology found that a high intake of these two carotenoids **reduced the risk of cataracts** by 18%. Including lutein and zeaxanthin, is one easy way to help prevent macular degeneration. Foods that contain lutein and zeaxanthin include; leafy green vegetables, eggs, mandarin, oranges and pawpaw.

Vitamin C also plays a role in keeping your eyes healthy. Citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons and grapefruits are full of vitamin C. Vitamin C can also be found in red capsicum, strawberries, raspberries, broccoli and brussels sprouts.

There is some evidence that **Vitamin E** may assist in the prevention of cataracts and even age-related macular degeneration by protecting cells from damage caused by free radicals that breaks down healthy tissue.

Foods with Vitamin E include; nuts, green leafy vegetables, sunflower oil, peanut butter and



Is there such a thing as 'Good Fats'?

Evidence suggests that adults who follow a Mediterranean-style diet high in **Omega 3 fatty acids** also have a much lower risk of developing macular degeneration.

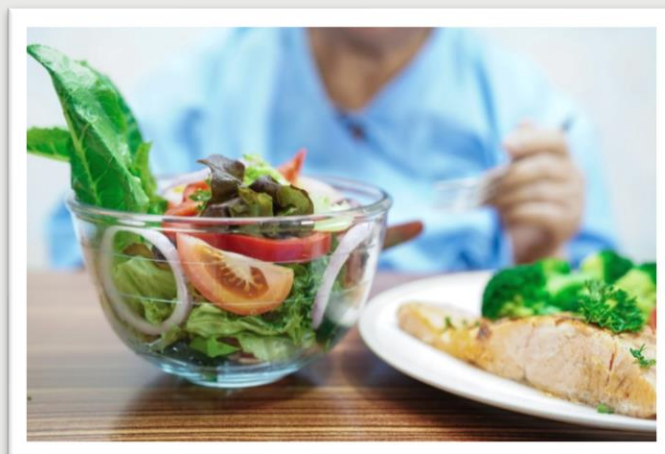
Essential Fatty Acids such as Omega 3 have been found to be important for retinal function. The University of Sydney in Australia found that people who ate one serving of fish per week had a 31% lower risk of early signs of age-related macular degeneration and those who ate one to two servings of nuts rich in Omega 3 fatty acids had a 35% lower risk of developing the disease.

Evidence suggests that Omega 3 fatty acids may have a protective effect on the eyes by preventing the buildup of plaque in the arteries or reducing inflammation in the retina.

Omega 3's can be found in; oily fish such as salmon, fresh or canned, mackerel and sardines as well as seeds, nuts and vegetable oils.

What about supplements?

It is a better idea to get your nutrients from food first. Eating **food for nutrients** is cheaper than purchasing supplements and also provides your body with a range of different nutrients rather than just one or two. The fibre found in foods also plays an important role in a healthy balanced diet.



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Summary

Eating a healthy, balanced diet rich in fruit, vegetables, grains and protein will ensure that all the systems in your body remain healthy. Eating leafy green vegetables, nuts, seafood, eggs and a variety of fruits and other vegetables will help ensure your eyes remain healthy and disease free.

If you do notice changes in your vision it is important that you **consult a health care professional** such as an optometrist or your GP.



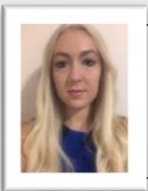
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Need a plan to improve eye health for you or someone you care for?

This article was written by OSCAR Care Group Dietitian, Kaylie Cochrane.
Please call or email our accredited Dietitians via our contact details below.

