

Eye and Vision Health

Throughout your lifetime, good ocular nutrition is an important factor in maintaining your vision. It's wise to have your eyes checked at least once every two years. The loss of vision associated with aging may be preventable and even irreversible through improved nutrition, according to Dr. D. Max Snodderly of The Schepens Eye Research Institute at Harvard University. He explains that "improved nutrition could help to retard the loss of visual sensitivity with age." More than 25 percent of the nutrients people absorb from food, the body uses to nourish the visual system. In the book, *Natural Vision - An Encyclopedia*, the diet plan recommended features a variety of whole foods, including: whole grains such as brown rice, millet, spelt and buckwheat, sea vegetables—dulse, nori and hijiki, fresh fruits and vegetables, especially kale, collard greens and spinach. Vitamin and mineral supplements are also useful. Dr. Paul Sieving, director of the National Eye Institute, conducted a major study that found vitamins of the A-C-E complex plus zinc can slow down the development of age-related macular degeneration. An accompanying study established that vitamins C and E help to inhibit the development or progression of cataracts, and ingesting ample vitamin C helps reduce the dangers of glaucoma. Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a disease that affects the macula, the part of the retina that allows you to see fine detail. AMD is the leading cause of vision loss in people over 55. The National Eye Institute's Age-Related Eye Disease Study found that taking certain vitamins and minerals might reduce the risk of developing advanced AMD. Consumption of fruits and vegetables containing two carotenoid pigments, lutein and zeaxanthin, are linked to reduced risk for such degeneration. Egg yolk and yellow corn contain the highest percentage of lutein and zeaxanthin. Yellow corn was the vegetable with the highest quantity of lutein and orange pepper was the vegetable with the highest amount of zeaxanthin. Substantial amounts of lutein and zeaxanthin were also present in kiwi fruit, grapes, spinach, orange juice, zucchini, and different kinds of squash. *Diet and Cataracts* - A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye that affects vision. Cataracts accompany aging and are common among seniors. More than half of Americans over age 80 either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery. Numerous recent studies have found that a diet rich in vitamins C and E and beta-carotene, used from one to 10 years, leads to the decrease in the progression of cataracts. Antioxidant supplements containing those substances are also effective. Carotenoids, substances high in vitamins C and E are abundant in the dark-green leafy vegetables, orange and red fruits, and such vegetables as tomatoes, peaches, squash and carrots. *Diet and Glaucoma* - Glaucoma amounts to a group of diseases that damage the eye's optic nerve and cause vision loss and eventual blindness. It occurs with the slow rise in the eyes' normal fluid pressure. But with early treatment you can usually protect your eyes against serious vision loss. A proper diet, too, can be useful in preventing or reducing the effects of glaucoma. Dr. Grossman says that research has revealed "glaucoma patients who take a brisk 40-minute walk five days a week for three months can reduce their eye pressure." He also suggests that taking the following nutritional supplements daily may be helpful in maintaining healthy eyesight: lipoic acid, vitamin C, coenzyme Q10 and omega 3 essential fatty acids. The University of Sydney's Ophthalmology Department research team recently performed another pertinent study about eating fish. It reinforces the idea that the high levels of omega-3 fats in certain fish have an anti-inflammatory effect that reduces incidence of glaucoma, cataracts and

AMD. Fish high in omega-3 fats include sardines, ocean trout, Atlantic salmon, tuna, herring and mackerel. Furthermore, experts claim that wearing sunglasses and a hat with a brim to block ultraviolet sunlight may help to delay cataract formation. They also say that if you smoke, stop for the sake of your vision. Additionally, both eye and overall bodily exercise are extremely important in the treatment and prevention of eye negative conditions. Exercise raises oxygen levels in the cells and increases ocular lymph and blood circulation. Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS) is caused by long sessions before a monitor. The eyes must resolve print or graphics while responding to glare, reflection and subliminal flickering. Headaches, blurred vision, burning eyes and stiff neck muscles are symptoms. Eye exercises can help in reducing ocular strain

Palming - Rub your hands together to make them warm. Close your eyes, and cover them with your warm hands. Your hands shouldn't touch your eyelids. If you see spots of light, wait until you see darkness. Repeat for 5 to 15 minutes at least twice a day.

Sunning - Incandescent bulb. Close your eyes, and look directly toward the sun, or an incandescent bulb (make sure your eyes are closed!). While facing the light, slowly rotate your head from side to side as far as you can. This gets the sunlight on the peripheral vision and helps bring more blood circulation to your neck. Repeat this slowly for 3 to 5 minutes.

Swinging - While looking out a window, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and arms at your sides. Shift your weight to your right foot and then to your left, lifting the opposite heel off the floor. As you do so, watch outside. Notice how a tree or other object seems to move opposite your lean. This exercise benefits your eyes and back.

Vision Shifting - Whenever it occurs to you that you've spent too much time at the monitor, purposely shift your vision to look at the weave of the fabric on your sleeve, the item on your wall or the tree across the street.

Squeezing - Close your eyes as tightly as you possibly can and squeeze them for three seconds. Then release them quickly. Then blink the eyes a few times. Repeat this exercise once during each computer session. This routine relaxes the eye muscles deeply.