



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences
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The Aging Eye: recommendations for Eye Health and Prevention of Disease

What causes a decline in eye health?

Aging is associated with an overall decline in eye health and an increased risk of eye disease. Age-related changes to the eye occur due to several causes. Oxidative stress has been implicated in the development of cataracts, dry eye syndrome, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and glaucoma. Additionally, inflammation is thought to play a major role in the development of AMD and dry eye syndrome. (Lin JB, 2016)

What changes can I make to my diet to keep my eye healthy?

Nutritional recommendations to decrease the risk for age-related eye disease consist of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory nutrients. (Rasmussen HM, 2013) Anti-oxidative supplements include vitamins C and E and carotenoids, while anti-inflammatory compounds include omega-3 fatty acids. Vitamin C rich foods include fruits and vegetables, and Vitamin E may be found in plant-based oils and nuts. Carotenoids are precursors to vitamin A, a highly essential compound for vision, and include lutein, B-carotene, and zinc. Carotenoids are found in green, leafy vegetables and egg yolk; these compounds are highly recommended for AMD and are likely helpful for cataracts and other ocular diseases. Excess consumption should be limited in smokers. (Li LH, 2020) Zinc is especially helpful for retina health and can be found in red meat and whole grains, with higher amounts for vegetarians. Omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA are especially helpful in preventing AMD and can be found in many fish and fish oils, with an FDA recommendation of 3mg/day. A healthy diet containing these nutrients with adequate supplementation will help reduce your future risk of ocular disease.

How can I change my daily life to reduce risk to my eyes?

Lifestyle modifications also help in preserving eye health. Extensive use of smartphones and laptops decreases the rate at which you blink your eyes and contributes to dry eye syndrome, Limiting use of these electronics may reduce symptoms of dry eye. Physical activity may have a protective role against vision loss, especially in glaucoma and AMD. (Ong SR, 2018) Controlling other health conditions, especially diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia, will reduce the likelihood of developing vision loss related to these conditions. Smoking has been linked to an increased risk of developing AMD, cataracts, and optic nerve damage.

Reducing or stopping tobacco use can help prevent blindness. Wear protective eyewear when in the sun and while doing potentially dangerous activities to reduce the risk of external damage to the eye. (Vision Health Initiative, CDC) These lifestyle changes can improve your overall health, improve your eye health and reduce changes in your vision.

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9 Ways to Protect Your Vision

1. Get regular comprehensive dilated eye exams.
2. Know your family's eye health history. It's important to know if anyone has been diagnosed with an eye disease or condition, since some are hereditary.
3. Eat right to protect your sight: In particular, eat plenty of dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, or collard greens, and fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon, albacore tuna, trout, and halibut.
4. Maintain a healthy weight.
5. Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities around the home, such as painting, yard work, and home repairs.
6. Quit smoking or never start.
7. Wear sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation.
8. Wash your hands before taking out your contact lenses and cleanse contact lenses properly to avoid infection.
9. Practice workplace eye safety.

Honey Glazed Carrots

Carrots are a great source of beta-carotene, a precursor of Vitamin A that is essential to eye health. Enjoy this sweet and savory version of cooked carrots.

Source: www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a58381/honey-glazed-carrots-recipe/

Ingredients:

- 1/4 c. butter
- 2 tbsp. honey
- 1/2 tsp. dried rosemary
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 15 carrots (2 lbs.), peeled and halved lengthwise
- Fresh thyme, for garnish (optional)

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°. In a saucepan over low heat, melt butter. Stir in honey, rosemary, and garlic powder and season with salt and pepper.
2. Place carrots on a large baking sheet. Pour over glaze and toss until coated.
3. Roast until caramelized and glazed, 35 to 40 minutes.
4. Garnish with thyme, if desired, before serving.

Overhead Triceps Extension

A good resistance band exercise that firms up the triceps muscles in the back of your arm.

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart and resistance band securely under your back foot or hold the band behind your back with the opposite hand.
2. With your elbow facing forward, hold the band over your back with one arm. Bend at the elbow and start parallel (horizontal) to the ground.
3. Keeping back flat and core engaged, extend arm up overhead.
4. Then lower back down. Repeat. Then repeat on the other side.

Resources

CDC Vision Health Initiative

www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/risk/tips.html

www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/faq.html

Resistance Band Exercise Resource

uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/wellness-resistancebandexercises.pdf

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