

Nutrition and Your Sight

Do Carrots Really Contribute to Vision Health?

The answer is “yes!” Beta-carotene, a nutrient in carrots, has been found to protect eyes against age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and the loss of vision associated with it. Vitamins C and E and the mineral zinc also reduce the risk of AMD by 35%.¹ Research has shown that nutrition can impact the development of AMD and cataracts, which are the two leading causes of blindness and visual impairment among millions of aging Americans.

Cataracts are caused when proteins in the lens of the eye are damaged. Each year, more than 1.5 million² cataract operations are performed at an estimated total cost of \$3.5 billion.³ This disorder sometimes occurs in children, but most frequently occurs in adults age 50 and older. One of the ways to decrease your risk of cataracts is to eat a healthy diet, including the following foods that are good sources of Vitamins C and E:

Vitamin C		Vitamin E	
• Oranges	• Tomato Juice	• Almonds	• Peanuts
• Papaya	• Strawberries	• Sunflower Seeds	• Peanut Butter
• Cantaloupe	• Broccoli	• Safflower Oil	• Corn Oil
• Green Peppers	• Grapefruit		

The macula is the part of the eye that turns light into fine color images in the brain. A breakdown of the macular area can lead to a loss of central vision. Approximately 13 million Americans suffer from early signs of AMD (age-related macular degeneration) and more than 1.75 million have significant symptoms, including visual loss associated with AMD. In addition



to the Vitamins A and E, beta-carotene and zinc have been found to reduce the risk of developing AMD. The following foods are a good source of these nutrients:

Zinc		Beta-Carotene	
• Oysters	• Baked Beans	• Carrots	• Apricots
• Beef Tenderloin	• Mixed Nuts	• Mangos	• Oatmeal
• Chicken (leg or breast)	• Milk	• Sweet Potatoes	• Ready-to-eat Cereal
	• Kidney Beans	• Spinach	• Peaches
		• Cantaloupe	

Consumption of the nutrients lutein and zeaxanthin, which are antioxidants and the only carotenoids located in the eye, has also been shown to protect against cataracts and AMD. The primary source for these nutrients is dark green leafy vegetables.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends eating at least two servings of fruits and at least three servings of vegetables each day. Not only will following these guidelines contribute to your overall health, but it will also help maintain your vision health by reducing the risk of cataracts and AMD.

Source:

- (1) Journal of American Medical Association, Dec. 2005
 - (2) All About Vision, "Cataracts and Cataract Surgery," 2006 (www.allaboutvision.com)
 - (3) All About Vision, 2006 (www.allaboutvision.com)
- Archives of Ophthalmology, 2004

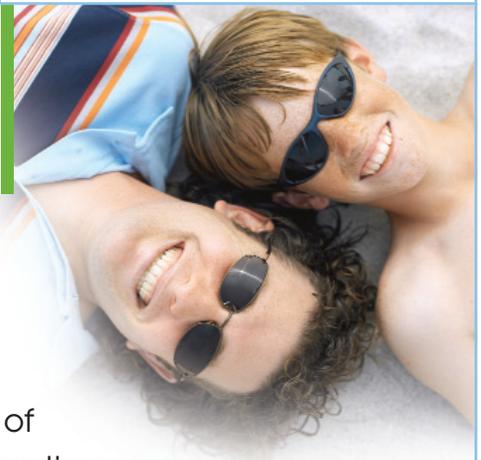
UV Awareness

The Damaging Effects of Ultraviolet Light on Your Eyes

As the stratospheric ozone layer is depleting UV radiation is increasing and right along with it the risk of eye damage. During the summer, UV radiation is three times as strong as it is during the winter. With the damaging effects, it is more important than ever to protect your eyes year round.

There are two different types of UV rays: UV-A rays, which damage part of the retina at the back of your eye called the macula and UV-B rays, which damage the cornea and lens. Over-exposure to damaging UV rays can cause a number of diseases, including:

- Snow blindness (photokeratitis) – reflections off of water, pavement, snow or exposure to artificial light sources, like tanning beds, can cause a burn to the cornea. Although the effect is temporary, it is painful and eyes will appear red, be sensitive to light and be teary.
- Cataracts – clouding of the eye's lens and can cause blurred vision. 20.5 million Americans have cataracts.¹
- Macular degeneration – deterioration of the central area of the retina, the macula. Results in blurred, distorted vision and blind spots. 1.8 million Americans are affected.²
- Pterygium – growth in the corner of the eye that is usually non-cancerous, it can block vision and grow over the cornea. Surgery is often required.
- Skin cancer around the eyelid – most common on the lower lid but can occur anywhere around the eye, the most common type is basal cell carcinoma.



The effects of UV rays aren't always seen right away, so it is important to protect yourself now. The best ways to protect yourself against UV radiation:

- Wear sunglasses that block 99-100% of UV rays whenever you go outside, whether it's cloudy or sunny.
- Lenses should wrap around your face to block more of the UV rays.
- When it comes to UV protection, bigger is better, bigger lenses will shield more of your eye.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to block UV rays from the top and sides.
- Contact lens wearers can get lenses that filter out a lot of the UV rays, but they are not a replacement for sunglasses.
- If you wear prescription glasses, photochromic lenses are another option – they darken when exposed to UV light.

For detection against these diseases, it is important to schedule a routine eye examination with your eye care provider and remember, slip on those shades when you head outdoors.

Source:

(1) The National Eye Institute (www.nei.gov/news), 2005

(2) American Health Assistance Foundation (www.ahaf.org/macular), 2006

Children's Eye Health

Protecting Your Child's Eyesight

Each year thousands of eye injuries occur in children 14 and younger related to toys and play activities. This is especially disturbing when you consider that 80% of learning in a child's first 12 years comes through the eyes.¹

During the summer months, children are especially vulnerable to eye injuries while participating in outdoor activities. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission offers the following tips for safety during the summer months and throughout the year:

- Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills, and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards to younger children.
- Be a label reader. Look for labels that give age and safety recommendations and use that information as a guide.
- Make sure your child wears a helmet and other safety gear when biking, skating and skateboarding, and when riding scooters, all-terrain vehicles, and horses. Studies on bicycle helmets have shown they can reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85 percent.
- Place barriers completely around your pool to prevent a child's access by using door and pool alarms. Closely supervise your child and be prepared in case of an emergency.
- Use softer-than standard baseballs, safety-release bases and batting helmets with face guards to reduce baseball-related injuries to children.
- To prevent serious injuries while using a trampoline, allow only one person on at a time, and do not allow somersaults. Use a shock-absorbing pad that completely covers the springs and place the trampoline away from structures and other play areas. Kids under 6-years-old should not use full-size trampolines.
- Install window guards to prevent children from falling out of open windows. Guards should be installed in children's bedrooms, parents' bedrooms, and other rooms where young children spend time. Or, install window stops that permit windows to open no more than 4 inches. Also, keep furniture away from windows to discourage children from climbing near windows.

Summer is a favorite time of year for children. This summer, take the time to review the tips above and make it memorable for the fun times, and not the injuries.

Source:

(1) Vision Council of America, 2006 (www.checkyearly.com)
Journal of Behavioral Optometry, "Visual Screening of Adjudicated Adolescents"

