



Journey through Health: Eyes

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Age-Related Eye Changes

Vision loss is a common problem with aging. Eye diseases such as cataracts, macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy are leading causes of age-related vision loss. Diabetes, high blood pressure, oxidative damage, cigarette smoke, and sunlight exposure, can increase the risk of age-related eye disease and vision loss.

Vision loss can affect older adults' food intake and physical activity. Vision loss can affect ability to drive to the grocery store and ability to read food labels and recipes. Individuals with vision loss may be less likely to engage in physical activity due to fear of falling. Furthermore, vision loss may increase the risk of foodborne illness if someone has difficulty seeing food expiration dates and food spoilage.

Diet, Physical Activity and Eye Health

A healthful diet has several roles in vision and eye health. It is well known that vitamin A has a role in maintaining vision, particularly night vision. A healthful diet and regular physical activity can also lower the risk of some age-related eye diseases by



helping to control blood glucose and blood pressure.

Many nutrients and phytochemicals in foods function as antioxidants. Antioxidants may have a role in helping to keep the eyes healthy by protecting the eyes from oxidative damage.

Antioxidants, such as vitamin C, vitamin E, carotenes (beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin), and zinc have been implicated in protecting the eyes from oxidative damage. Other antioxidants, including selenium, copper, and omega-3 fatty acids may also have a protective role in eye health.

It is not yet possible to conclude that antioxidants have a role in preventing age-related eye diseases. However, the evidence suggests consuming a healthful diet containing a variety of foods rich in antioxidants may be beneficial for eye health.

Fruits and vegetables are good sources of vitamin A and many antioxidant nutrients including vitamin C and carotenes (beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin). Low-fat dairy is also a good source of vitamin A. Whole grains, nuts, and seeds are good sources of vitamin E and copper. Lean meats are a good source of zinc and selenium. Seafood is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, selenium, and copper.

The role of multiple nutrients in eye health highlights the importance of a healthful diet including fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole grains, and lean protein foods.

MyPlate Messages for Promoting Eye Health

Several of the MyPlate messages can help promote eye health.

Build a Healthy Plate

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Switch to skim or 1% milk.
- Make at least half your grains whole.
- Vary your protein choices
 - Twice a week, make seafood the protein on your plate.

- Eat beans, peas and lentils, which are a natural source of fiber and protein.

Cut Back on Foods High in Solid Fats, Added sugars, and Salt

- Choose foods and drinks with little or no added sugars
- Look out for salt in foods you buy.
- Eat fewer foods that are high in saturated fats.

Eat the Right Amount of Calories for You

- Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- Cook more often at home, where you are in control of what is in your food.
- When eating out, choose lower calorie options.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so sensibly.

Be Physically Active Your Way

- At least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity a week, or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity physical activity.
 - If you cannot meet this guideline, be as physically active as your abilities and conditions will allow.

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