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ON BEHALF OF VISION EXPO, WE SINCERELY THANK YOU FOR BEING WITH US THIS YEAR.

Vision Expo Has Gone Green!

We have eliminated all paper session evaluation forms. Please be sure to complete your electronic session evaluations online when you login to request your CE Letter for each course you attended! Your feedback is important to us as our Education Planning Committee considers content and speakers for future meetings to provide you with the best education possible.

vision expo

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FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES

Sam Winnegrad has no financial interests to disclose.

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INTRODUCTION

NUTRITION IS ESSENTIAL FOR OVERALL HEALTH, AND ITS EFFECTS ON EYE HEALTH.

DIETARY CHOICES AFFECT KEY OCULAR STRUCTURES, INCLUDING THE RETINA, MACULA, CORNEA, TEAR FILM, LENS, AND OPTIC NERVE.

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VISUAL PATHWAY

- The retina, located at the back of the eye, is crucial for processing light and sending visual signals to the brain. The macula, a small central area of the retina, is responsible for sharp, detailed central vision.
- The cornea, the clear front layer of the eye, helps to focus incoming light, while the tear film keeps the eye moist and free of debris.
- The crystalline lens, located behind the iris, further focuses light onto the retina, and the optic nerve transmits visual information from the retina to the brain.

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POOR NUTRITION

Poor nutrition can have severe consequences on eye health, leading to various vision problems and even blindness.

Nutritional deficiencies are a common cause of eye-related issues, and understanding these deficiencies is critical in preventing and managing vision problems.

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VITAMIN A

Vitamin A deficiency is one of the most well-known causes of vision problems.

This essential vitamin plays a crucial role in maintaining the health of the cornea and retina.

A lack of vitamin A can lead to night blindness, where individuals struggle to see in low light conditions.

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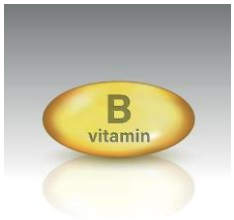
VITAMIN B

Vitamin B deficiencies can also significantly impact vision.

Wernicke's syndrome, related to thiamine (vitamin B1) deficiency, can cause eye movement abnormalities and vision issues.

Other B vitamin deficiencies can result in symptoms such as blurred vision and retinal damage.



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NUTRIENT DEFICIENCY

A lack of essential fatty acids or antioxidants can cause corneal vascularization, where abnormal blood vessels grow in the cornea, potentially impairing vision.

Certain medications, particularly those prescribed for high cholesterol, can adversely affect eye health.

These medications may contribute to blurred vision and other ocular symptoms, underscoring the need for careful consideration of both diet and medication in maintaining eye health.

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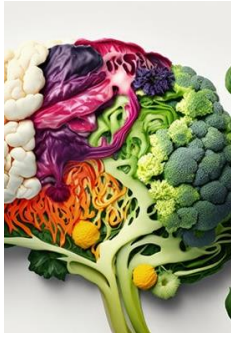
DEFICIENCIES

Understanding the critical role of nutrition in eye health is essential for preserving vision and preventing ocular diseases. By addressing nutritional deficiencies and being aware of the potential impact of medications, individuals can take proactive steps to protect their vision and maintain healthy eyes.



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VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Vitamins and minerals play a crucial role in maintaining eye health, offering protection against various vision disorders and promoting overall ocular health.

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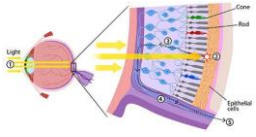
VITAMIN A



Vitamin A is essential for maintaining the health of the retina, particularly for night vision.

It helps produce rhodopsin, a pigment crucial for seeing in low light conditions.

Additionally, vitamin A supports the integrity of the cornea, preventing dryness and other eye surface issues.

Common sources include carrots, sweet potatoes, and leafy green vegetables.

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VITAMIN B

B vitamins, including B1 (thiamine), B2 (riboflavin), B6, B12, and folic acid, are vital for reducing the risk of macular degeneration and cataracts.

These vitamins support proper nerve function and reduce inflammation, which can impact the optic nerve and overall eye health.

Foods rich in B vitamins include whole grains, eggs, dairy products, and legumes.

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VITAMIN C

Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that protects the eyes from oxidative stress, a factor in the development of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Supports the health of blood vessels in the eyes, reducing the risk of retinal damage. Citrus fruits, strawberries, bell peppers, and broccoli are excellent sources of vitamin C.

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VITAMIN D

Vitamin D plays a role in reducing the risk of macular degeneration and may help prevent dry eye syndrome.

This vitamin supports immune function and reduces inflammation, which can protect the eyes from various conditions.

Vitamin D can be obtained from sunlight exposure, fortified foods, and fatty fish. Salmon is an excellent source of Vitamin D.

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VITAMIN E AND ZINC

Vitamin E is another antioxidant that helps protect the eyes from damage caused by free radicals. It is particularly important in reducing the risk of cataracts and AMD. Nuts, seeds, spinach, and vegetable oils are rich in vitamin E.

Zinc is a mineral that plays a significant role in maintaining retinal health and preventing macular degeneration. It helps vitamin A create melanin, a protective pigment in the eyes.

Zinc is found in high concentrations in the retina, and its deficiency can lead to impaired vision. Oysters, beef, nuts, and dairy products are good sources of zinc.

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CAROTENOIDS

Lutein and zeaxanthin are carotenoids that accumulate in the macula and retina, where they act as natural sunblocks by absorbing harmful blue light and protecting the eyes from damage.

These nutrients are particularly important for maintaining macular health and reducing the risk of AMD.

Leafy green vegetables like spinach and kale, as well as egg yolks, are rich in lutein and zeaxanthin.

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OMEGA 3

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential for maintaining the health of the tear film, which is crucial for preventing dry eye syndrome.

These fatty acids, particularly DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), are also vital for retinal health and visual development.

Omega-3s help reduce inflammation and support overall eye health.

Fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines, as well as flaxseeds and walnuts, are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

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AMD

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a leading cause of vision loss in older adults, with two primary forms: dry AMD and wet AMD.

Dry AMD is more common and progresses slowly, characterized by the thinning of the macula, leading to gradual vision loss.

Wet AMD is less common but more severe, caused by abnormal blood vessels that grow under the retina and leak fluid or blood, leading to rapid and significant vision loss.

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AMD NUTRITION

Numerous studies have investigated the role of nutrition in slowing the progression of AMD.

One significant study is the Women's Antioxidant and Folic Acid Cardiovascular Study (WAFACS), which explored the impact of antioxidants and B vitamins on cardiovascular health and, by extension, eye health.

The study suggested that supplementation with folic acid, vitamin B6, and vitamin B12 could reduce the risk of AMD, particularly in women with a high risk of cardiovascular disease.

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AREDS STUDY

- Another pivotal study is the Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS) and its follow-up, AREDS 2.
- The original AREDS study found that a specific combination of vitamins and minerals, including vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, and zinc, significantly reduced the risk of advanced AMD in individuals with intermediate or advanced stages of the disease.
- The AREDS 2 study refined this formula by adding lutein and zeaxanthin and removing beta-carotene, which posed a risk to smokers.
- The revised formula showed a similar protective effect, demonstrating that zinc, lutein, zeaxanthin, and omega-3 fatty acids are particularly beneficial in delaying AMD progression.

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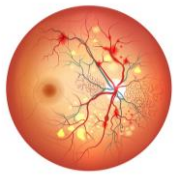
DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

Diabetic retinopathy is another significant ocular disease closely linked to nutrition.

This condition occurs as a complication of diabetes, where high blood sugar levels damage the blood vessels in the retina.

Diabetic retinopathy progresses through stages, starting with mild nonproliferative retinopathy, where microaneurysms form, to more severe stages, including proliferative diabetic retinopathy, where new, abnormal blood vessels grow on the retina.



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DIET

Diet plays a crucial role in managing diabetes and, by extension, in preventing or delaying the onset of diabetic retinopathy.

Controlling blood sugar levels through a balanced diet rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats is essential in reducing the risk of retinopathy.

The Diabetes Control and Complications Trial (DCCT) is a landmark study that established the importance of tight blood sugar control in reducing the risk of diabetic complications, including retinopathy.

The study found that intensive blood glucose management significantly reduced the onset and progression of diabetic retinopathy compared to conventional treatment.

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ACCORD STUDY

- The Action to Control Cardiovascular Risk in Diabetics (ACCORD) Study examined the effects of intensive blood sugar control on cardiovascular outcomes and diabetic complications.
- While the study's primary focus was on cardiovascular health, it also highlighted the benefits of managing blood sugar levels to prevent diabetic retinopathy, further emphasizing the critical role of diet in eye health.
- The evidence from these studies underscores the significant impact of nutrition on ocular diseases like AMD and diabetic retinopathy.

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GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is a group of eye conditions that damage the optic nerve, often due to increased intraocular pressure, and can lead to irreversible vision loss if not managed effectively.

While genetics and other factors play significant roles in the development of glaucoma, emerging research suggests that nutrition may also influence glaucoma risk and progression.

The Study of Osteoporotic Fractures, explored the relationship between dietary intake of vitamins A and C, carotenoids, and glaucoma risk. The study found that higher intake of vitamin C and carotenoids, particularly through diet, was associated with a reduced risk of developing glaucoma.

These findings suggest that antioxidants, which help reduce oxidative stress—a contributing factor to optic nerve damage—may play a protective role in glaucoma management.

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CATARACTS

- Cataracts are another common age-related eye condition characterized by the clouding of the eye's lens, leading to blurred vision, glare sensitivity, and, if untreated, significant vision loss.
- The Nurses' Health Study and the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study are two large-scale, long-term studies that have provided valuable insights into the relationship between diet and cataract formation.
- Both studies found that higher intakes of vitamins C and E, as well as lutein and zeaxanthin, were associated with slower cataract development.
- These antioxidants help protect the lens from oxidative damage, which is a significant factor in cataract development.

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CATARACTS
DRY EYE SYNDROME

Another important study, The Roche European American Cataract Trial, focused on the role of vitamin E and other antioxidants in slowing the progression of cataracts. The study provided evidence that vitamin E, in particular, may help delay cataract formation by protecting the lens from oxidative damage.

Dry eye syndrome is a prevalent condition characterized by insufficient tear production or poor tear quality, leading to symptoms such as dryness, irritation, burning, and fluctuating vision.

While environmental factors and aging contribute to dry eye syndrome, nutrition also plays a significant role in managing the condition.

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OMEGA 3

Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish such as salmon and mackerel, as well as in flaxseeds and walnuts, have been shown to improve tear production and reduce inflammation, which are key factors in dry eye syndrome.

The Women's Health Study, a large prospective cohort study, found that women who consumed higher amounts of omega-3 fatty acids had a significantly lower risk of developing dry eye syndrome compared to those with lower intakes.

The anti-inflammatory properties of omega-3s are believed to help maintain the health of the tear film and reduce the severity of dry eye symptoms.

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NUTRITION

Other research has explored the role of vitamins A, C, and E in managing dry eye syndrome.

Vitamin A is essential for maintaining the health of the corneal surface, while vitamins C and E, as antioxidants, help protect the eye from oxidative damage.

The relationship between nutrition and eye health extends beyond general well-being, with specific nutrients playing crucial roles in preventing and managing conditions like glaucoma, cataracts, and dry eye syndrome.

Studies have consistently shown that diets rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and omega-3 fatty acids are beneficial in reducing the risk of these conditions and slowing their progression.

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NUTRITION

- The link between diet and eye health is well-established, with specific foods known to provide essential nutrients that support vision and protect against eye diseases.
- Leafy greens, such as kale and spinach, are among the most potent foods for promoting eye health.
- These vegetables are exceptionally high in lutein and zeaxanthin, two carotenoids that accumulate in the retina and macula, where they act as natural sunblocks, filtering harmful blue light and protecting the eyes from oxidative damage.
- Regularly consuming these leafy greens has been shown to reduce the risk of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and cataracts.

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FISH

- Fish, particularly fatty varieties like salmon and mackerel, are rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids, especially docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).
- DHA is a crucial component of retinal cell membranes, and adequate intake is vital for maintaining retinal health and reducing inflammation, which can contribute to conditions like dry eye syndrome and AMD.
- Omega-3s also play a role in tear production and overall eye moisture, making them beneficial for individuals with dry eyes.
- Including fish in your diet at least twice a week is recommended for optimal eye health.
- For those who do not consume fish, omega-3 supplements or plant-based sources like flaxseeds and chia seeds can provide similar benefits.

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FRUITS

- Fruits, such as oranges and berries, are excellent sources of vitamins C and A, both of which are vital for eye health.
- Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that helps protect the eyes from oxidative stress, a major factor in the development of cataracts and AMD. It also supports the health of blood vessels in the eyes, reducing the risk of retinal damage.
- Vitamin A is essential for maintaining the health of the cornea and preventing night blindness.
- Oranges, strawberries, blueberries, and other citrus fruits and berries are easy to incorporate into your diet, whether eaten fresh, added to yogurt or cereals, or blended into juices and smoothies.

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NUTS AND SEEDS

Nuts and seeds, including almonds, sunflower seeds, and walnuts, are rich in vitamin E and zinc.

Vitamin E is an antioxidant that protects the eyes from free radical damage, helping to slow the progression of cataracts and AMD.

Zinc plays a crucial role in maintaining retinal health and supporting the function of enzymes that protect against oxidative damage.

A small handful of nuts or seeds can be a convenient snack or a crunchy addition to salads, yogurt, or oatmeal, providing a nutrient boost for your eyes.

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VARIETY

Eat a rainbow: Incorporating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables ensures that you get a broad spectrum of vitamins and minerals.

Each color represents different nutrients that benefit eye health, such as lutein and zeaxanthin in green vegetables, the vitamin C in oranges, and the beta-carotene in carrots.

Include omega-3-rich foods: Aim to include fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, or sardines in your meals at least twice a week. If you don't eat fish, consider adding flaxseeds, chia seeds, or walnuts to your diet, or taking a high-quality omega-3 supplement.

Replace processed snacks with a handful of nuts or seeds, which are packed with vitamin E and zinc. One serving of almonds, for example, provide nearly half of your daily recommended amount of vitamin E.

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BEST PRACTICES

- One "best-practice" would be to conscientiously add greens to every meal.
- Whether it's spinach in your omelet, kale in your smoothie, or a side salad with dinner, make a habit of including leafy greens in your meals.
- Our bodies are primarily comprised of water.
- Approximately 78% of the human body is composed of water.
- Drinking plenty of water throughout the day helps maintain moisture in your eyes, reducing the risk of dry eye syndrome.

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BEST PRACTICES

There are certain foods that have been linked to various diseases that extend far beyond eye health.

Reduce your intake of processed foods, sugary snacks, and excessive caffeine, which can contribute to poor overall health and potentially exacerbate eye conditions.

Focus on whole foods that are nutrient-dense and low in added sugars.

A balanced diet is the foundation of good eye health.

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CONCLUSION

- Nutrition has a critical role in maintaining eye health and preventing ocular diseases.
- Specific nutrients—such as vitamins A, C, D, E, and minerals like zinc and omega-3 fatty acids—play vital roles in supporting the health of the retina, macula, cornea, and other ocular structures.

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CONCLUSION

To maintain optimal eye health, it's essential to adopt a diet rich in colorful fruits and vegetables, leafy greens, fatty fish, nuts, and whole grains.

These foods provide the necessary vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that help protect your eyes from oxidative damage, reduce inflammation, and support overall eye function.

Reflect on your current diet and consider incorporating more of these eye-friendly foods.

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