



# Macular Degeneration: Sight-Saving Strategies

It's likely you've heard about age-related macular degeneration (AMD), which is a leading cause of vision loss for people 65 and over. AMD is a loss of central vision, which can make reading impossible and affect your ability to see people's faces.

Now, research shows that dietary changes can help reduce your risk of AMD—or slow the progression of the disease. Here are two important findings:

- 1. Supplements help.** Two clinical trials sponsored by the National Institutes of Health show that for people who have intermediate AMD, using a supplement containing vitamins C and E, lutein/zeaxanthin and zinc delays the progression.
- 2. What you eat makes a difference.** Another study set out to see if dietary patterns impacted AMD. By reviewing the diets of the participants in the two clinical trials, researchers identified two categories: In one, named **Oriental**, participants ate plenty of vegetables, legumes, fruit, whole grains, tomatoes and seafood. In the other, called **Western**, people consumed relatively high intakes of red meat, processed meat, high-fat dairy products, French fries and refined grains.

Which was better? The **Oriental** pattern was associated with a lower risk of AMD, while the **Western** diet markedly *increased* the risk.

So, if you're looking for ways to prevent or slow the progress of AMD, set your sights on a healthy diet. Simple changes can help preserve your vision for all the fun activities that lie ahead.

**Instead of one food or a single nutrient, researchers found that groups of foods made the difference in lowering the risk of AMD.**



# Let's Look at Whole Grains

Small steps can lead to big results. Consider this small change!



Researchers from the Laboratory for Nutrition and Vision Research at Tufts University are excited about results of a recent study. The study was conducted over one year with mice, well-suited for studies of age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

The main finding from the rigorous research was this: the type of carbohydrates you eat could play a role in the development of AMD. Here are some details.

Mice were fed either a diet rich in: 1) simple starches or carbohydrates, like those in white bread and sweetened beverages; 2) complex carbohydrates, like those found in whole grains; or 3) both. The third diet provided simple carbs for six months followed by complex carbs for six months. All three diets provided the same calories and nutrients with 45 percent of the calories from carbohydrates.

The study's results were described in an interview with Sheldon Rowan, a scientist at the Tuft's laboratory (2017 article in Tufts Nutrition):

**The National Eye Institute estimates that the number of people with AMD will double by 2050, from 2.07 million to 5.44 million. In the United States, white Americans are most likely to develop AMD.**

*Sure enough, mice with the low-glycemic [rich in complex carbohydrates] did not develop AMD, while mice fed the high-glycemic diet [rich in simple carbohydrates] almost all came down with the disease, a result in keeping with previous research. In the mice that switched diets, though, Rowan saw something completely unexpected: not only did they avoid AMD, but the existing damage to their retinas was reversed. "No one had ever seen that before," Rowan said of the findings, which were reported in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. "The most common form of AMD doesn't really have a treatment right now—but this suggests that just changing to a healthier eating pattern could have a huge impact."*



**"In humans, this is the equivalent of switching out four or five slices of white bread each day for whole grains. It's a minor alteration that will pay great benefits."**

**- Allen Taylor, senior scientist and director of the Laboratory for Nutrition and Vision Research, Tufts University**

Explaining the results is complicated as it involves digestion patterns, blood glucose levels, inflammation, gut bacteria and protein cell structures. But the bottom line may be most important, anyway: choose foods with complex carbohydrates more often—a small step with possible big impact.

Sources:

<http://sites.tufts.edu/nutrition/summer-2017/eating-for-healthy-eyes/>

<https://now.tufts.edu/news-releases/switching-low-glycemic-diet-may-stop-age-related-eye-disease-study-suggests>

<http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1702302114>

## Eye Health:

### *Foods that may help prevent cataracts, macular degeneration and glaucoma*

**Lutein and zeaxanthin** are carotenoids that give vegetables green or orange colors. Like other carotenoids, they are thought to play a role in good eye health by protecting eye tissues from sunlight damage and reducing the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration.



**Good food sources:** leafy greens (kale, spinach, Swiss chard, turnip greens, collards), peas, summer squash, pumpkin, brussels sprouts, broccoli, asparagus, lettuce, carrots and pistachios

**Beta carotene**, another colorful carotenoid, is converted to vitamin A by your body and helps prevent dry eyes and night blindness. Vitamin A also reduces the risk of eye infections.



**Good food sources:** dark orange and green veggies, such as sweet potatoes, carrots, butternut squash, spinach, and collard greens; animal sources, such as liver, milk and eggs

**Antioxidants** like vitamin C, may lower the risk for cataracts.



**Good food sources:** bell peppers of all colors, strawberries, oranges, grapefruit, kiwifruit, Brussels sprouts and broccoli

**Carotenoids in veggies are absorbed best when eaten with a little drizzle of healthy fat such as olive or canola oil—or a few slices of avocado.**

Sources:  
<https://www.myfooddata.com/articles/high-lutein-and-zeaxanthin-foods.php>  
<https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/preventing-illness/5-top-foods-for-eye-health>



## Testimonial

**Georgia** regularly attends **Fresh Conversations** at **Scott 4 Mile Community Center** in **Des Moines**.

**Georgia Ochoa**, a retired nurse, knows a thing or two about health. She understands the importance of healthy eating and appreciates the information and encouragement she gets at **Fresh Conversations** meetings. The program helps Georgia put what she knows into action.

Georgia especially likes the up-to-date information on the health benefits of fruits and vegetables, and enjoys tasting new recipes. Last summer, a featured veggie was roasted radishes. “I was excited to try them because I like radishes. But afterwards I decided I will stick with the raw version.”

**Fresh Conversations** fits with Georgia’s positive attitude. What’s her advice for others who face health challenges? “Focus on what you can control, such as making wise choices in what you eat.”

Thanks for the reminder, Georgia!

Word Jumble Answers - Page 4  
1. Lutein  
2. Beta Carotene  
3. Eyesight  
4. Whole Grains  
5. Oriental  
6. Antioxidants  
Bonus: Carotenoids



# Recipe of the Month

## Cabbage & Carrot Soup



Jump into spring with a tasty cabbage and carrot soup.

Recipe makes 4 - one cup servings.

- 4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- ½ onion, roughly-chopped
- 3 carrots, sliced into rounds
- ¼ head green cabbage, roughly chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- Vegetable oil

Cook garlic in 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil until softened. Add chicken stock and bring to a boil. Add onions and carrots and simmer for 10 minutes until softened. Add cabbage and simmer again until cabbage is soft. Season with pepper.

Each serving contains: 78 calories; 3 g protein; 54 g fat; 9 g carbohydrates; 9 g fiber; 38 mg calcium; 263 mg potassium; 570 mg sodium; 36 mcg folate

**Colorful carrots add eye appeal and vitamin A for eye health! Serve with fruit salad for more vitamin C.**

## Take Action Corner

### This month I will...

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## Word Jumble

Unscramble these key words found in this month's newsletter. Circled letters can be unscrambled for a bonus word.

1. NUTILE

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2. ETBA TROENACE

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3. STEGEIHY

— — — —  — — — — —

4. LEHOW SNARGI

— — — — —  — — — — —  — — — —

5. TRIALEON

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6. STAIXONATIDN

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BONUS

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## How Are You Doing?



**More than 8 million adults age 50 and older are affected by isolation.**

This is a common question we ask our relatives, neighbors and friends. If they're feeling isolated or lonely, chances are they won't say so...but don't be afraid to dig a little deeper.

Research shows that social isolation is as bad for health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. If you or your loved ones are feeling isolated, check out the assessment tool at [Connect2Affect.org](http://Connect2Affect.org) to get practical advice on how to help.

Source: AARP Foundation



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