

Nutrition & Eye Health



Nutrition is an important part of eye health. Experts recognize the importance of food and nutrition in good vision. Certain nutrients with antioxidant properties are beneficial, including carotenoid compounds such as beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin, and vitamins C and E. Zinc and omega-3 fatty acids are also important for eye health. What foods are good sources of these important nutrients? Consider the following suggestions from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Mayo Clinic:



VITAMIN A AND BETA CAROTENE

Dark leafy greens such as kale, collard greens, turnip greens and spinach are a rich source of lutein and zeaxanthin, which are related to vitamin A and beta carotene, and are believed to protect eye tissues from sunlight damage and reduce the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration. Your body converts beta carotene to vitamin A, a nutrient that helps prevent dry eyes and night blindness. Beta carotene and vitamin A also help reduce the risk eye infections.

If kale isn't your cup of tea, try sweet potatoes which are also an excellent source of beta carotene. Additional good sources of these nutrients include broccoli, peas, kiwi, red grapes, yellow squash, and especially deep orange fruits and vegetables such as carrots, pumpkin, butternut squash, oranges, mangoes and honeydew melon. Liver, milk and eggs are other great sources of vitamin A.



Note that the best sources of vitamins and antioxidants are from whole foods, as opposed to pills, since it may be a food's combination of nutrients that have a synergistic healing effect. And, similar to lutein and zeaxanthin, beta carotene and vitamin A are absorbed best when eaten with a little healthy fat such as olive oil.

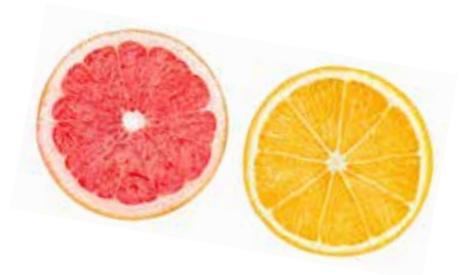


CATECHINS

Speaking of tea, green tea is a source of the antioxidant catechins which are responsible for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Antioxidants may help lower the risk of developing cataracts and macular degeneration. Other foods that are high in catechins include red wine, chocolate, berries and apples. Black tea also boasts catechins, but in lower amounts than in green tea.

VITAMIN C

Vitamin C is an antioxidant that can help lower your risk of cataracts. It occurs in many common foods including citrus fruits such as orange and grapefruit, strawberries, bell peppers, broccoli and cantaloupe.



OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Omega-3 fatty acids can help alleviate dry eye problems. Healthy fats as found in salmon or other types of fish such as herring, tuna, mackerel, rainbow trout, or sardines (two to three times per week), walnuts (which also include eye-healthy vitamin E), flax and chia seeds are good to include as part of the diet. Salmon is also a good source of vitamin D, which helps protect against macular degeneration. Also consider milk and orange juice fortified with vitamin D.

NEXT STEPS

In addition to the nutrients noted above, it's important to maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight increases your risk for developing diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease which can impact vision.

Need some ideas for incorporating these foods in your diet? Consider the recipes below from an HCR ManorCare partner Sysco Food Services.



healthy recipes

BRAISED KALE W/BACON AND CIDER

- 2 slices of bacon, cooked, crumbled
- 1 pound 8 oz. fresh kale, chopped
- 1/4 cup apple cider
- 1 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 1/2 cup sour apples, diced
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper

1. Place bacon in dutch oven and cook 5 minutes or until crisp. Remove bacon, reserving drippings.
2. Crumble bacon and set aside.
3. Add kale to bacon drippings and cook, stirring occasionally, until wilted.
4. Add the apple cider and cider vinegar to kale and cook, covered for 10 minutes.
5. Add apple, salt and pepper, cook 5 minutes or until apple is tender. Sprinkle with bacon.
6. Hold at 140°F or higher for service (ccp).

Servings: 8



LEMON ROSEMARY SALMON

- 4 - 4 oz. salmon filets, skinless
- 4 oz. lemon juice
- 2 tsp. lemon zest
- 1 tbsp. fresh rosemary, minced
- 1/8 tsp. black pepper
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. vegetable oil

1. Combine lemon juice, lemon zest, rosemary, salt, and oil together.
2. Pour over the salmon filets, coat well.
3. Spray a 2 inch baking sheet with cooking spray, place the coated salmon filets on the baking sheet.
4. Bake at 350°F until the internal temperature reaches 145°F for 15 seconds (ccp).
5. Hold at 140°F or higher for service (ccp).

Note:

1. For ground or chopped menu items, omit lemon zest and grind or chop food to appropriate consistency.
2. If using varying sizes of single portion food items, please adjust the recipe accordingly to ensure proper recipe integrity and serving amount.

Servings: 4



STRAWBERRY SPINACH SALAD

- 6 oz. fresh spinach
- 2 peeled, sliced oranges
- 2 cups sliced strawberries
- 3 oz. pecan pieces, toasted
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 tbsp. white vinegar
- 1 tsp. vanilla flavoring
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. granulated sugar
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper

1. Mix oil, vinegar, vanilla extract, salt, sugar, and black pepper in small bowl with wire whip until well blended, set aside.
2. Toss spinach with oranges, strawberries, and pecans in large bowl. Serve with 1/2 oz. vinaigrette.
3. Hold at 41°F or lower for service (ccp).

Servings: 8



LEARN
MORE

Balance, HCR ManorCare's comprehensive health and wellness blog, supplies readers with healthy ideas throughout the year. The blog is designed to serve as a resource, not only for patients, residents and families, but for anyone who strives to live a healthy, "balanced" life. For more information and help in making healthy choices, go to balance.hcr-manorcare.com and sign up to receive our newsletters. If you need help making a health care decision, visit our care finder and live chat.

References:

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics > 5 Top foods for eye health, accessed 12/19/2016
<http://www.eatright.org/resource/health/wellness/preventing-illness/5-top-foods-for-eye-health>

Mayo Clinic > Eating for eye health, accessed 12/19/2016
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/expert-blog/eating-for-eye-health/bgp-20095574>