Nutrition News for Seniors
EAT WELL
Provided by the Nutrition Division of the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services

Healthy Vision for Healthy Aging



Nutrition Tips to Help Protect Your Eyes

As we age, maintaining good vision becomes increasingly important for independence, safety, and quality of life. While regular eye exams are essential, research shows that a healthy lifestyle and nutritious diet may help support eye health and reduce the risk of certain age-related eye conditions. Learn how nutrition can play a role in protecting your eyesight and discover simple ways to add more vision-supporting foods to your meals.

Understanding Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is one of the leading causes of vision loss among older adults. AMD affects the macula, the central part of the retina responsible for sharp, detailed vision needed for reading, driving, recognizing faces, and performing everyday activities. Although AMD does not usually cause complete blindness, it can make daily tasks more difficult and impact independence.

AMD has risk factors. Some cannot be changed, including age, family history and genetics. Other factors that may be influenced by lifestyle choices include smoking, high blood pressure, obesity, physical inactivity and poor diet. The good news is that healthy habits may help support long-term eye health.

Nutrients & Foods That Support Healthy Vision

Nutrient	How It Helps Your Eyes	Good Food Sources
Lutein & Zeaxanthin	Powerful antioxidants concentrated in the retina that may help protect eyes from sunlight and age-related damage.	Spinach, kale, collard greens, broccoli, peas, corn, eggs
Vitamin A	Helps maintain normal vision, especially in low-light conditions.	Sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, cantaloupe, apricots, dark leafy greens
Vitamin C	Supports healthy blood vessels in the eyes and provides antioxidant protection.	Oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, kiwi, bell peppers, tomatoes
Vitamin E	Helps protect eye cells from damage caused by free radicals.	Almonds, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, avocado, vegetable oils
Zinc	Helps transport vitamin A to the retina and supports healthy vision.	Lean beef, poultry, seafood, beans, nuts, fortified cereals
Omega-3 fatty acids	May help support retinal health and play a role in reducing dry eye symptoms. Aim to enjoy fish at least twice per week when possible	Salmon, trout, sardines, herring, mackerel, tuna. Plant sources such as walnuts, flaxseed, and chia seeds also provide beneficial fats

WESTCHESTER COUNTY
Kenneth W. Jenkins, County Executive
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Eye Health and Diabetes

Diabetes can affect the small blood vessels throughout the body, including those in the eyes. Over time, high blood sugar can damage these delicate vessels and increase the risk of **diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, glaucoma, and vision loss**. Because early eye changes may not cause noticeable symptoms, prevention and regular screening are especially important. If you have diabetes:

✓ Monitor blood sugar levels as directed
✓ Take medications as prescribed
✓ Keep blood pressure under control
✓ Schedule regular dilated eye exams

Healthy eating habits benefit both blood sugar management and eye health.

Beyond Nutrition: Everyday Habits for Healthy Eyes

Good nutrition is an important part of eye health, but the choices you make every day can also help protect your vision as you age. Small daily habits can make a big difference over time.

Quit smoking if you currently smoke	Manage blood pressure and cholesterol
Stay physically active	Get regular comprehensive eye exams
Maintain a healthy weight	Stay hydrated

What about Eye Health Supplements?

A healthy diet is the best foundation for eye health, but some older adults may benefit from supplements. Nutrients such as **lutein, zeaxanthin, vitamins C and E, zinc**, and **omega-3s** play important roles in supporting healthy eyes and vision. Supplements are not a substitute for a balanced diet, and individual needs can vary. Always check with your doctor or eye care professional before starting a supplement, especially if you take medications.

RECIPE CORNER: Black Bean & Spinach Stuffed Sweet Potatoes (makes 2 servings)

Sweet potatoes provide beta-carotene, while spinach supplies lutein and zeaxanthin-nutrients that help support healthy vision.

INGREDIENTS



- 2 large sweet potatoes
- 1½ tsp olive oil
- ½ clove garlic, minced
- ½ (15-oz) can black beans, rinsed and drained
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ½ bunch fresh spinach
- ½ lime
- 3 oz. nonfat Greek yogurt
- Sliced scallions, optional

DIRECTIONS

- Pierce sweet potatoes with a fork and microwave on high, turning halfway through, until tender, about 16–18 minutes.
- Meanwhile, heat olive oil and garlic in a skillet. Add beans, cumin, and 1 Tbsp. water; cook about 2 minutes. Add spinach and cook until just wilted.
- Split potatoes and squeeze with lime. Top with the black bean-spinach mixture, a spoonful of Greek yogurt and scallions, if desired.

Recipe adapted from womansday.com

Nutrition per serving: 350 calories | 14g protein | 6g fat | 62g carbohydrate | 12g fiber | 230mg sodium

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