

Healthy You

FAST FACTS FOR YOUR HEALTH

How Food Affects Your Vision

Many things affect your long-term vision health, and one of the big ones is genetics. But if you have a genetic link to an eye disorder, does that mean there's nothing you can do to avoid developing the disease? Of course not! In fact, the foods you eat play a significant role in your eye health and overall health. Several studies show that eating a variety of nutrients may lower your risk for certain eye disorders and contribute life-long vision health.

The Top Foods for Eye Health

When it comes to eating for eye health, incorporating a variety of healthy foods may help ward off disease and promote overall eye health. The foods below are by no means the only foods that promote eye health, but research has shown that they contain the richest sources of nutrients shown to support eye health.

Beef: Compared to other meats, beef contains the highest amount of zinc. Your eyes contain a lot of zinc, which is used to help deliver vitamin A from the liver to the retina to produce the eye-protecting pigment, melanin.

Broccoli: This healthful vegetable contains vitamin C, which has been shown to reduce cataracts risk and slow vision loss. The crunchy cruciferous veg also boasts lutein and zeaxanthin, substances linked to the reduced risk of chronic eye diseases, including age-related macular degeneration, which can cause vision loss.

Citrus: When it comes to being rich in vitamin C, few foods match up with citrus fruits. Oranges, grapefruits, lemons and limes are great choices.

Eggs: The humble egg contains a wide array of eye-loving nutrients. They contain lutein, omega-3s (which help the eyes in several ways, including promoting healthy retina function) and vitamin E. Vitamin E is a particularly helpful antioxidant for vision, as it protects the eyes from harmful substances that can damage your eyes.

Fish: Oily fish varieties, like tuna, sardines, trout, salmon, mackerel and herring, are excellent sources of omega-3s.

Leafy greens: It's always a good idea to add a helping of leafy greens, like spinach or collard greens, to your plate. They contain vitamin C, and some variety of greens also pack eye-loving lutein and zeaxanthin.

Seeds: Sprinkle a teaspoon of chia or hemp seeds into a bowl of oatmeal or a smoothie and you'll get a jolt of eye-protecting vitamin E and omega-3s.

And although it's not a food, drinking **water** is important to preventing dry eye and eye irritation.

Foods to Limit for the Sake of Your Eye Health

You've heard it before: Diet sodas and highly processed foods aren't doing your body any favors. These foods don't contain many healthful nutrients, and when it comes to your eyes, studies have linked these foods to vision problems.

Diet soda has been linked to an increased risk of a retina disease called diabetic retinopathy. You should also limit foods that are high in salt, as research has shown that high-sodium diets boost your risk of cataracts. Finally, foods that are high in refined carbohydrates, like pasta, white bread and packaged baked goods, may further increase your risk of age-related macular degeneration, if you have a genetic tie to the disease.

Eye Health Isn't All in Your Genes

If you have a genetic tie to an eye disorder, it means you are more likely to develop that eye disorder — but that doesn't mean that you'll definitely develop it. There's a lot you can control when it comes to your health. Diet is a major one, and filling your plate with the nutritious foods outlined in this article is a great way to feed your eye health and ward off disease for the long haul.

Another way to put your eye health in your hands is by regularly seeing an eye care professional, who can identify any potential vision problems early and recommend effective treatments.

Need to find a vision provider? DeltaVision is here to help. You can locate a provider near you online, or you can call the number on the back of your Delta Dental ID card to speak with a Customer Service representative who can walk you through it.

SOURCES:

[https://www.nvisioncenters.com/diet-and-eye-health/#:~:text=An%20unhealthy%20diet%20of%20highly,related%20macular%20degeneration%20\(AMD\).](https://www.nvisioncenters.com/diet-and-eye-health/#:~:text=An%20unhealthy%20diet%20of%20highly,related%20macular%20degeneration%20(AMD).)

Meatless and Mouth-friendly: Sweet Potato Burgers

Is your New Year's Resolution still firmly front of mind? If your 2021 goals include some form of eating healthier, then this sweet potato burger recipe will help keep you on track.

But if veggie burgers inspire thoughts of highly processed, flavorless and dry patties, this recipe might change your mind. This version is savory and spicy, and the fiber-rich sweet potato lends a great texture.

In addition to including a heaping helping of veggies, this dish features the antioxidant-dense spice turmeric, which boasts anti-inflammatory properties. The white beans are also rich in calcium, which is one of the best nutrients to help keep your teeth healthy and strong.

Ingredients:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup mashed, boiled sweet potato (or about $\frac{1}{2}$ medium peeled and cooked sweet potato)
- 15 ounces canned white beans, rinsed and drained
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole-wheat breadcrumbs
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 tablespoons dried cilantro
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon turmeric
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- Ground black pepper, to taste
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 4 whole-wheat hamburger buns or lettuce wraps
- Toppings of your choice (our favorites are sliced avocado, a small handful of spinach and thinly sliced red onion)

Directions:

1. Place mashed sweet potato and white beans into a food processor. Blend until well combined, then transfer mixture to a large bowl.
2. Add whole-wheat breadcrumbs, ginger, garlic powder, cilantro, turmeric, cayenne and salt. Generously season with pepper. Mix ingredients together well. Adjust seasonings and add pepper to taste.
3. Use your hands to form four, tightly packed patties about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick. Place on a plate, cover with plastic wrap and put in the fridge for 10 to 15 minutes to firm up.
4. Spray skillet with nonstick cooking spray and place over medium heat. When the skillet is hot, add each burger and cook about 2 to 4 minutes on each side until golden brown.
5. Remove from heat, and add to buns or lettuce wraps. Add your favorite toppings. Enjoy!