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Our eyes are considered to be one of the very important organs in our body. It allows us to experience the beauty of what life has to offer. It gives us the chance to see the faces of our loved ones, bask in nature's wonders, and witness life's miracles. There is just too much to see in this world that we could not simply take our ability to see things for granted.

### • **Omega-3 Prevents Macular Degeneration**

In a study lasting for a period of one year, a group of researchers from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine's Wilmer Eye Institute examined information regarding the consumption of shellfish and fish in 2,391 individuals aged 65 to 84. The subjects of the study reside along the eastern shore of Maryland.

Upon the completion of their dietary assessments, the researchers evaluated the participants for macular degeneration. Results showed that 1,942 of the participants had no macular degeneration while 227 had the early stage of the disorder. Additionally, 153 individuals were at the intermediate stage of the disease and 68 exhibited macular degeneration at an advanced stage that were already showing signs of abnormal blood vessel bleeding and growth, which can directly lead to the severe loss of vision or blindness.

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Written by Frank Mangano

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The participants in the study groups consumed an average of at least a single serving of shellfish or fish per week. Those who were diagnosed with advanced-stage macular degeneration were found to be considerably less likely to eat fish and seafood which are high in omega-3. This is according to one of the researchers, Sheila K. West, PhD. She is a member of the Salisbury Eye Evaluation study.

The researchers said that the results of the study support the findings of previously conducted studies saying that the consumption of shellfish and fish that are rich in omega-3 may help protect against advanced-stage age-related macular degeneration. The findings of the study are found in the December issue of the journal of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, *Ophthalmology*.

The study also looked into the benefits of dietary zinc obtained from the consumption of oyster and crab against the risk for macular degeneration. However, a significant relationship between the two was not established. West speculated that the probably reason behind the result is that the zinc levels which were obtained from seafood and fish were considerably low, in comparison with supplement levels.

### **Melatonin**

Melatonin is a naturally-occurring hormone produced in the body primarily responsible for the regulation of sleeping patterns. But since 1993, melatonin has been readily available for over-the-counter use as a dietary supplement in the United States.

Since then, supplementing with melatonin has traditionally been used as a natural sleep purveyor. Sleeping pills have never been more prevalent than they are today, many of them abused due to dependence – the feeling that one can't fall asleep without some assistance.

If this were all melatonin provided, it'd be worthy of taking now and then, whenever one had trouble sleeping. But for anyone even remotely concerned about his or her eyes, a new Argentinean study indicates why melatonin is worth a second look (pun intended).

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That's because researchers from the University of Buenos Aires and the National Research Council have discovered that melatonin may help stave off a disease that's responsible for 15 percent of permanent vision loss in the country.

The disease is called uveitis and is called that because it involves the inflammation of the uvea, a portion of the eye that can't be seen without a special tool ophthalmologists use during eye exams. The uvea is between the outermost and innermost layers of the eye. When anyone experiences any combination of significant itching in the eye, accompanied by redness, swelling around the eye, blurred vision, eye pain and sensitivity to light, it's a good bet uveitis is the culprit.

From a chemical/scientific standpoint, uveitis appears to occur when certain cells are higher than they ought to be. But experimental models indicate that those levels reduce when melatonin levels are elevated through treatment.

As per usual when it comes to scientific study, more research needs to be done, but this is a very encouraging finding regarding a supplement that was once believed to only be beneficial for regulating sleep. But we in the natural health world know this was never melatonin's sole beneficial function. Others include improving blood pressure readings, reducing the severity of headaches, delaying the onset of type I diabetes (based on animal studies), even helping with smoking cessation.

### **Yellow Vegetables**

New research suggests that those beautiful bright yellow vegetables she's been enjoying can help protect her against the leading cause of blindness among older Americans—Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD).

The study, published in an edition of the Archives of Ophthalmology, observed the diet patterns of approximately 1,800 women between the ages of 50 and 79. After taking blood work and performing eye scans on the women, they discovered women 75 years and younger who consumed foods with yellow pigment were at a lesser risk in acquiring the intermediate stage of AMD.

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The chemicals responsible for these eye-protecting qualities are from the vegetables' carotenoids—lutein and zeaxanthin, specifically—found in pumpkin, corn and squash. They're also found in egg yolks and green vegetables like broccoli, peas, lettuce and spinach. These carotenoids seem to help absorb excess light before it damages the retina, the part of the eye AMD affects.

Researchers from the University of Wisconsin say these results don't come as a surprise. In fact, as they write in the journal, it establishes a "broad body of evidence from observational and experimental studies that these carotenoids may protect against AMD."

### **Zinc**

Kelp, fish, mushrooms, pecans, poultry, legumes, lima beans, and whole grains are types of foods that contain Zinc. It is also found in whole wheat, oysters, and oat. Zinc enables the retina to function properly. This is the reason why it is considered to be an important nutrient for better eye health. The role of zinc in easing macular degeneration has been thoroughly studied, and the deficiency in such may cause deterioration of the macula. At the same time, zinc helps in the release of Vitamin A from the liver to be delivered to the eye tissues.

### **Garlic**

While garlic is widely known to ease high blood pressure, skin disorders and antimicrobial actions, it can also contribute to better eye sight. One factor of poor eyesight is due to poor circulation in the body. Eating garlic helps boost the flow of blood, and makes the immune system stronger. Although garlic is mostly used to enhance the aroma and flavor of a meal when cooking, eating it raw can contribute to the health of our eyes because of its sulfur content that makes the lenses of the eyes resilient and strong. Also, fresh and raw garlic appears to be more potent than cooked ones.

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### Sources

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