



June 2017

Cataract Awareness Month

What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye that affects vision. It occurs when some of the protein in the lens clumps together, preventing light from passing through it, making it harder to see. Most cataracts are related to aging. By age 80 more than half of all Americans either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery.

A cataract can occur in one or both eyes.

Different types of cataracts include:

- **Age-related.** These form as you get older.
- **Congenital.** Cataract that a baby is born with or forms in childhood. May be caused by infection, injury, or poor development in the womb.
- **Secondary.** Results from other medical conditions (like diabetes), environmental exposure or medicines.
- **Traumatic.** These form after an injury to the eye.

What Causes Cataracts?

No one knows for sure why the eye's lens changes as we age, forming cataracts. One theory is that cataracts are caused by oxidative changes in the lens. Besides advancing age, cataract risk factors that have been identified include:

- Certain diseases (diabetes, high blood pressure).
- Personal behavior (smoking, alcohol use, obesity).
- Some medications (corticosteroid, statins, hormone replacement therapy).
- The environment (exposure to ultraviolet sunlight, toxic substances, radiation).
- Previous eye injury, inflammation, or surgery.
- Family history.
- Severe near sightedness.



Normal vision



Cataract

The most common symptoms of a cataract:

- Cloudy or blurry vision.
- Colors seem faded.
- Glare. Headlights, lamps, or sunlight may appear too bright. A halo may appear around lights.
- Poor night vision.
- Double vision or multiple images in one eye. Symptom may clear as cataract gets larger.
- Frequent prescription changes in your glasses or contact lenses.

These symptoms also can be a sign of other eye problems. If you have any of these symptoms, check with your eye care professional.

How is a cataract treated?

- The symptoms of early cataract may be improved with new eyeglasses, brighter lighting, anti-glare sunglasses, or magnifying lenses.
- If these measures do not help, surgery to remove the cloudy lens and replace it with an artificial lens is the only effective treatment.

Note: A cataract needs to be removed only when vision loss interferes with your everyday activities, such as driving, reading, or watching TV.

What can I do to protect my vision?

- Wear sunglasses and a hat with a brim to block ultraviolet sunlight.
- If you smoke or drink heavily, stop.
- Studies show fruits and vegetables high in antioxidants may help prevent cataracts.

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Nutrients and Foods to help Prevent Cataracts

Though there is controversy about whether cataracts can be prevented, a number of studies suggest certain nutrients and nutritional supplements may reduce your risk of cataracts. Following is a list of these nutrients along with some good food sources and the Recommended Daily Amount (RDA), if one has been set.

- ◆ **Beta-carotene:** Carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, kale, butternut squash, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cantaloupe, mango, apricot.
- ◆ **Bioflavonoids (Flavonoids):** Tea, red wine, blueberries, cherries, citrus fruits, soy products, legumes.
- ◆ **Lutein and Zeaxanthin:** Spinach, kale, turnip and collard greens, other leafy green vegetables, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, squash.
- ◆ **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel and herring; ground flaxseeds, walnuts.
- ◆ **Vitamin C:** Sweet peppers (red or green), kale, spinach, squash, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, strawberries, oranges, cantaloupe.
RDA: 90 mg for men; 70 mg for women
- ◆ **Vitamin E:** Almonds, sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, peanuts/peanut butter, spinach, broccoli, Brussels sprouts.
RDA: 15 mg for teens and adults
- ◆ **Zinc** (helps you use lutein and zeaxanthin): Oysters, Dungeness crab, lean meat and poultry, egg yolk, chick peas, lentils and other beans and legumes.
RDA: 11 mg for men; 8 mg for women



In general, it's best to get most nutrients through a healthy diet, including at least two servings of fish per week and plenty of colorful fruits and vegetables.

Nutrition Tip: Pump up your pasta with veggies. It's simple. For every half cup of pasta, toss a cup of raw vegetables such as broccoli or cauliflower florets, sliced green beans, squash, or asparagus into the water with the pasta a minute or two before it's ready to be drained and mixed with sauce. Voilà. You have cut the amount of pasta you'll eat, you've upped the veggies, and you've got a more interesting dish.



Six Benefits of Muscle-Strengthening Exercise

Muscle-strengthening exercise, also known as strength-training or resistance exercise, is more than just about making muscles stronger. Here are six other reasons to start or to keep doing strength training:

1. **Makes you mentally sharper.** A program of twice weekly muscle-strengthening exercises results in better problem-solving skills and better memory than a program of balance-and-toning only.
2. **Improves your physical attractiveness.** With strength training, muscles firm up improving ones shape and appearance.
3. **Helps people regain their confidence.** One of the greatest benefits is the sense of self-esteem or empowerment. People become more active because they're stronger and feel more energetic.
4. **Can help fight depression.** A study showed that moderately depressed participants that began a strength-training program three times a week had quite a remarkable reduction in depression, and improvements in sleep and self-confidence.
5. **Helps you sleep better.** Sometimes one's internal clock is out of whack causing poor and interrupted sleep. But with strength training, we sleep deeper, sleep longer, and have fewer awakenings.
6. **Can help curb back pain.** Many people who sit at a desk all day have weak abdominal and lower back muscles, which is a risk factor for lower-back pain. Strengthening those muscles can reduce the pain.

