

# Nutrition

## Focusing on Eye Health

by Jaime Sherman

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Eyesight is one of the first senses to go as we age. According to the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS), about 16 million people in the United States over the age of 45 have experienced some vision loss. In fact, about half of Americans over the age of 75 will experience a "visually significant" cataract resulting in about six billion dollars worth of medical expenses. The National Eye Institute states that 1.6 million Americans over 55 have advanced age-related macular degeneration. The ARS is studying dietary methods of controlling vision loss due to cataracts and macular degeneration.

Eating your fruits and vegetables helps to ensure you are consuming enough beneficial antioxidants (which are good for your heart as well.) Antioxidants are compounds found in food that help promote healthy tissues and cells in the eyes and other organs like the heart, and work by neutralizing harmful substances called free radicals that are formed when body cells burn oxygen for energy. Antioxidants are mostly found in fruits and vegetables and the darker the better. The ARS says the lens of the eye contains high levels of the vitamins C (citrus fruits and dark colored vegetables) and E (oils, nuts). These vitamins or foods rich in these nutrients should be taken

together in order to increase absorption. Carotenoids such as lutein (dark green leafy vegetables, broccoli, peas, and dark red and orange fruit, kiwi, mangoes, honeydew) and zeaxanthin (the substance that give corn and saffron the yellowish color) are also important in maintaining proper functioning of the retina. As many of you know, Vitamin A is another important nutrient for maintaining eye health and night vision so – eat your carrots and tomatoes and drink your milk!

As one ages the normal structures of the eye may become weak and cloudy due to the build up of proteins. The study from the ARS (2003) looked at 478 non-diabetic women between the ages of 53 and 73. Data from food frequency questionnaires were compiled after 13 to 15 years and found that women with the highest intakes of vitamins C, E, riboflavin, folate, and carotenoids experienced a lower prevalence of eye damage, and were 64 percent less likely to experience eye damage if they used vitamin C supplements. It is thought that many of these substances absorb harmful light (blue or UV) and allow the internal structures of the eye to focus on the task at hand instead of fighting off harmful substances that get in their way and coat the cells.

So maybe your mother was right – you should eat your vegetables!

## Beat The Heat

From *seniorhealth.about.com*

Summer can mean high temperatures and problems for seniors who are at higher risk for heat related illness

Higher temperatures are a part of the summer season, but over the last few years it seems that not a summer goes by without a fatal heat wave. Seniors especially are at risk from heat related health problems. These conditions can range from mild discomfort to full-fledged emergencies.

### Heat Related Conditions

Heat stress occurs when a strain is placed on the body as a result of hot weather.

Heat fatigue is a feeling of weakness brought on by high outdoor temperature. Symptoms include cool, moist skin and a weakened pulse. The person may feel faint.

Heat syncope is sudden dizziness experienced after exercising in the heat. The skin appears pale and sweaty but is generally moist and cool. The pulse may be weakened, and the heart rate is usually rapid. Body temperature is normal.

Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms in the abdomen, arms, or legs following strenuous activity. The skin is usually moist and cool and the pulse is normal or slightly raised. Body temperature is mostly normal. Heat cramps often are caused by a lack of salt in the body, but salt replacement should not be considered without advice from a physician.

Heat exhaustion is a warning that the body is getting too hot. The person may be thirsty, giddy, weak, uncoordinated, nauseous, and sweating profusely. The body temperature is usually normal and the pulse is normal or raised. The skin is cold and clammy. Although heat exhaustion often is caused by the body's loss of water and salt, salt supplements should only be taken with advice from a doctor.

Heat stroke can be LIFE-THREATENING! Victims of heat stroke almost always die so immediate medical attention is essential when problems first begin. A person with heat stroke has a body temperature above 104° F. Other symptoms may include confusion, combativeness, bizarre behavior, faintness, staggering, strong rapid pulse, dry flushed skin, lack of sweating, possible delirium or coma.

### Preventing Heat Related Health Conditions

Wear light-colored, lightweight, clothing that is loose-fitting for air circulation.

Wear a hat or use an umbrella when outside, even if you are not in the direct sun. Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater anytime you go outside.

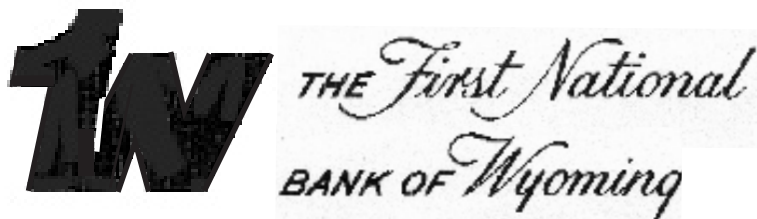
Water is the beverage of choice in the summer. Drink water before outdoor activities and drink water at regular intervals during the day. Avoid beverages with caffeine or alcoholic beverages that can aid dehydration.

Try to schedule outdoor activities for cooler times of the day--before 10 a.m. and after 6 p.m.

During outdoor activity, take rest breaks frequently and drink water every 15 to 20 minutes, even if you don't feel thirsty. If you have clear, pale urine, you are probably drinking enough fluids.

If you have a chronic medical problem, talk with your doctor about additional precautions you should take to prevent heat related illness. Some conditions and medications may place you at higher risk.

If you show any signs of heat related illness try to get to a cooler place as soon as possible, sip some cool fluids and sponge yourself off with look with lukewarm tap water.



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