

# vision quest

Five key nutrients for preventing and treating cataracts and macular degeneration

**N**utritional factors play a key role in the prevention and treatment of cataracts and macular degeneration. A diet high in richly colored fruits and vegetables—as well as targeted supplements—is associated with a lowered risk for both conditions.

## LUTEIN AND ZEAXANTHIN

Research shows that lutein and zeaxanthin supplements not only help protect against macular degeneration, but can also improve visual function in people with macular degeneration. Specifically, in patients with macular degeneration, 10–15 mg of lutein daily led to improvements, including glare recovery, contrast sensitivity, and visual acuity, as compared to a placebo group.

Lutein is also important in preventing cataracts and improving visual function in people with existing

cataracts. Like the macula, the human lens concentrates lutein and zeaxanthin. In fact, these are the only carotenes found in the human lens. Three large studies have shown that the intake of lutein was inversely associated with cataract surgery.

## FLAVONOID-RICH EXTRACTS

Flavonoid-rich extracts of blueberry, bilberry, pine bark, or grape seed also offer valuable eye-health benefits. In addition to possessing excellent antioxidant activity, these extracts have been shown to improve blood flow to the retina and enhance visual processes, especially poor night vision. Take 150–300 mg daily of one of these extracts to support eye health.

## NUTRITIONAL ANTIOXIDANTS

Nutritional antioxidants—such as beta-carotene, vitamins C and E, zinc, copper, and selenium—are extremely important for eye health. Studies conducted by the Age-Related Eye Disease Study Research Group confirm that a combination of these nutrients produces better results than any single one alone. But even something as simple as taking vitamin C or zinc can produce dramatic effects. In one study, women who took vitamin C for more than 10 years had a 77 percent lower

rate of cataract formation compared to women who did not take the vitamin.

Zinc plays an essential role in the metabolism of the retina and the visual process. A two-year trial involving 151 subjects showed that the group taking zinc had significantly less visual loss than the placebo group.

## COQ10 AND ACETYL-L-CARNITINE

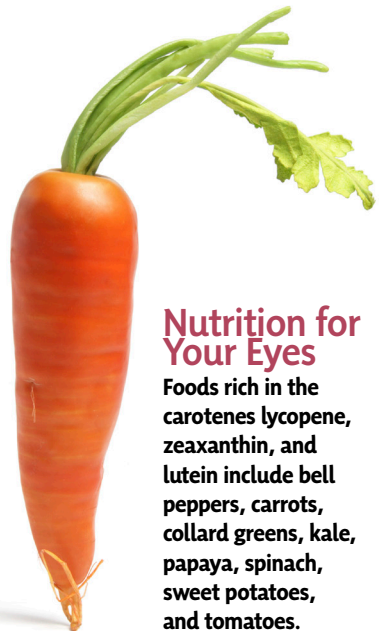
In one double-blind study, 200 mg of acetyl-L-carnitine, omega-3 fatty acids (460 mg EPA and 320 mg DHA), and 20 mg of CoQ10 was shown to improve visual function and macular alterations in early-stage macular degeneration. This combination stopped the disease from progressing in 47 out of 48 cases.

## FISH OILS

There is a strong relationship between atherosclerosis (known as hardening of the arteries) and eye health. Therefore, just as in atherosclerosis, omega-3 fatty acids from fish oils play an important role in preventing macular degeneration and other eye conditions. The recommended dosage is 1,000 mg of EPA and DHA.

### Editors' Product Picks:

- **Bluebonnet Nutrition** Eye Antioxidant
- **Diamond Herpanacine** Diamond Eye Health
- **Twinlab** OcuGuard Omega



### Nutrition for Your Eyes

Foods rich in the carotenes lycopene, zeaxanthin, and lutein include bell peppers, carrots, collard greens, kale, papaya, spinach, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes.

**Michael T. Murray, ND**, is the author of more than 30 books on natural health, including *The Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine, Third Edition*. He is regarded as one of the world's top authorities on natural medicine, and is a sought-after lecturer and educator. Visit him online at [doctormurray.com](http://doctormurray.com).