

# 10 FOODS

TO FORTIFY AGAINST

# DECLINING EYESIGHT



## 10 Foods to Fortify Against Declining Eyesight

When it comes to your health, are you paying as much attention to your eyesight as you could? Sadly, many people aren't. Instead, heart health or managing blood glucose levels are generally higher-priority concerns.

While these are all important factors, you don't want to overlook other areas of your health, such as your eyesight.

Too many people end up wearing high-prescription glasses, damaging their eyes to the point where they simply can't go up in prescription any longer.

The good news however is that you don't have to just sit by and watch this happen. Not a chance! However, the good news is that you don't want to just sit idly by and watch this happen - not a chance!

Avoiding reading in dark lights to reduce eye strain, exercising your eye by making it focus on a moving object that comes closer and closer, and massaging your temples are all great ways to help promote healthier eyes.

On top of that, there are certain foods you should be including in your diet plan to really kick start better eye health and make sure your peepers are working well and seeing clearly into your later years.

Wondering which foods will serve you well? Let's look at the top choices that you *must* start adding to your diet plan today.



## Spinach



Often called one of the best superfoods you can eat, spinach is loaded with good nutrition. Not only does spinach contain only a few calories per cup - meaning you can eat a whole lot of it without risking weight gain - it's rich in two key nutrients necessary for strong eyes.

Spinach is an excellent source of both lutein and zeaxanthin, which are plant pigments that can help put the breaks on issues such as macular degeneration and cataracts.

Spinach also ranks highly on the antioxidant scale, meaning that it will provide strong protection against oxidation caused by free radicals that can go on to cause disease. Research published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention* noted that

spinach may be strongly associated with a reduced risk of breast cancer.<sup>1</sup> On top of that, it also provides a great dose of iron, making it useful in preventing iron-deficiency anemia in those who don't consume a lot of red meat.

Serve yours with a drizzle of olive oil, as the healthy fats may help further promote the absorption of spinach's fat-soluble vitamins.

## Avocados

Next up on the list of must-eat foods for vision protection is avocado. Avocados are high in vitamin E, which is a fat-soluble vitamin that can help promote healthy skin, hair, and nails while also acting as an antioxidant in the body to defend against free radical damage. If you've noticed that your skin or hair is looking a little lackluster these days, it could be due to the lack of vitamin E in your menu. Those who are consuming a very low-fat diet are at an especially high risk for low vitamin E intake, thanks to the fact that this vitamin is most predominately found in high-fat foods.



What's more, avocados are also a rich source of lutein and will help keep cataracts at bay. Eat a quarter avocado per day (or more!) to help reduce your risk.

## Eggs



Before you dish up that bowl of cereal in the morning, you may want to stop and consider serving some eggs instead. But don't be too quick to toss that yolk!

Whole eggs are a rich source of nutrients - plus, studies <sup>2</sup> suggest they won't put you at risk for heart disease as long as you eat them in moderation and don't have any preexisting heart-health concerns.

A particularly important nutrient found in eggs is vitamin A, which may help to protect against night blindness. For instance, if you often struggle to drive in the dark, eggs may just help make it a bit easier.

On top of that, the vitamin A found in eggs may also help reduce eye dryness,

so if that's an issue you're commonly dealing with, you'll want to start looking for creative ways to serve eggs regularly in your menu.

This highly versatile food can be scrambled, hard boiled, soft boiled, cooked over easy, or poached, so there's no excuse for not getting it into your diet plan.

## Watermelon

Remember the 'good old days' back when you were a kid sitting on your deck spitting out the seeds from the watermelon pieces your parents gave you? What great fun that was!

As an adult, you may often overlook eating watermelon as part of your meals, but it's actually a great food to be serving. As watermelon is primarily composed of water, many adults consider it nutrient-deficient, but that just isn't the case. In fact, it's a very rich source of one of the most important nutrients to keeping your eyesight in check – lycopene.



Watermelon contains a very high dose of lycopene - more than most foods! According to research published in *Nutrition*, this can help prevent cataracts.<sup>3</sup>

Another reason to add watermelon to your diet is the fact that it offers great anti-inflammatory and antioxidant benefits. Inflammation is at the root of so many different diseases and conditions, so doing all you can to prevent it will definitely work in your favor.

Finally, because of the fact watermelon is primarily all water content, this also means that it's going to be an excellent way to hydrate your body as well.

## Broccoli



Another lutein-rich food, broccoli is a can't-afford-to-miss item you'll want to be including in your diet regularly. The great thing about broccoli is that it's also highly versatile and can be steamed, stir-fried, sautéed, baked, or simply eaten raw if you prefer.

However, it's important to note that if you choose to steam broccoli, you should aim to

steam it as little as possible. This is because the nutrients in broccoli appear to be especially sensitive to steaming, so too much can cause them to break down and exert fewer benefits.

Broccoli also offers strong anti-inflammatory benefits, and those who consume about 1.66 cups per day tend to show the greatest reductions in overall levels of inflammation occurring in their system.

Broccoli is a nutrient powerhouse containing well over 200% of your daily intake for vitamin K, over 100% of your intake for vitamin C, and in addition to that, the minerals and nutrients chromium, folate, pantothenic acid, vitamin B6, vitamin E, phosphorus, manganese, choline, vitamin A, potassium, copper, vitamin B1, magnesium, zinc, iron, calcium, selenium, and vitamin B3.

At approximately 55 calories per cup, it's also a very low-calorie food to be including in your menu.

## Salmon

If there is one protein source to be getting in with your daily diet plan, salmon would be it. The great thing about salmon is that it's not just a rich source of high-quality protein - it's also a great source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Omega-3 fatty acids are an essential fatty acid that the body cannot produce on its own. Because of this, it's extremely important that you are consuming them through your meals instead. Most people are running low in omega-3 fatty acid intake and instead overdo their omega-6 fatty acid consumption. Omega-6 fatty acids are found in many of the heavily processed foods we eat today and are also found in vegetable based oils as well.



So, getting back to omega-3's: what do they have to offer that makes salmon so special?

First, research published in *JAMA Ophthalmology*<sup>4</sup> noted that subjects who consumed two or more servings of salmon (or another type of fatty fish) each week had a reduced risk for developing age-related macular degeneration. If this condition runs in your family, or you've already been warned you're at risk for developing it, you'll want to be doing all you can to sidestep it.

Next, salmon is also excellent for reducing inflammation in the body as well, according to the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*.<sup>6</sup> This can help protect you against autoimmune diseases as well as conditions such as heart disease or diabetes.





Speaking of diabetes, a study published in *Clinical Nutrition* noted that salmon may boost insulin sensitivity and therefore help to ward off the disease over time.<sup>7</sup>

While salmon is slightly higher in calories than some other sources of protein - including white fish, chicken, or turkey breast - don't take this to mean that you should

avoid it. Just work those calories into your daily diet so that you are keeping your total calorie balance in check.

## Tomatoes

One oft-overlooked vegetable is the tomato. While you probably do eat tomatoes in any tomato *sauce* you consume – on pizza, in spaghetti, or in your favorite lasagna recipe, when was the last time you sliced a fresh tomato?

Has it been longer than you can remember? If so, you aren't alone. Most people are not consuming tomatoes as regularly as they should be, which is a shame as they are a nutrient powerhouse.

One nutrient that tomatoes are especially rich in is lycopene, which - as noted earlier - is excellent for helping to reduce cataracts and decreasing your overall risk for age-related macular degeneration.

Men should especially focus on including this food into their diet plan, as the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*<sup>5</sup> noted that increasing tomato consumption is associated with a decreased risk and occurrence of prostate cancer.

The moral of the story? Eat your tomatoes – *not in a sauce!* Remember that tomato sauce often contains added salt and sugar, which are going to take away from the health benefits that tomatoes have to offer.

Sliced tomatoes work great on sandwiches, in salads, or simply eaten with a small sprinkling of salt and pepper alongside your main meal.



## Legumes



If there's one thing that you can start doing to improve your health today, it's going vegetarian for a meal or two per week (or more!). Western cultures tend to be reliant on meat as a source of protein, and while the right kinds can definitely be healthy additions to our diets, too much red meat in particular can raise our cholesterol, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Going vegetarian for a meal or two can help offset this increase and offer a number of other benefits. Many vegetarian sources of protein are coupled with dietary fiber or other nutrients, giving them a lot to offer nutrition-wise.

Kidney beans, black eyed peas, and lentils are all an excellent source of zinc, which can help to protect the retina and decrease your overall risk factor for macular degeneration and cataracts.

Legumes are also a very powerful source of dietary fiber, which will help to further protect you against high cholesterol levels, heart disease,<sup>8</sup> and stroke.

Finally, they're also a good source of complex carbohydrates as well, which are excellent for supplying you with the energy you need to complete intense workout sessions. The protein-carb combination these foods have to offer makes them an ideal choice for consuming around the workout period.

## Zucchini

Another food to add to your list to consume if you are hoping to improve your eye health is zucchini. Often overlooked, this summer squash is great when stir-fried, baked, or even grated and served in a salad.

The unique thing about zucchini is that it contains both lutein as well as zeaxanthin, two of the most powerful nutrients required to help combat cataracts and keep your eyes healthy.

Containing just 36 calories per (cooked) cup, zucchini is a low-calorie way to get an excellent dose of manganese, copper, vitamin C, folate, vitamin B1, vitamin K, vitamin B6, vitamin B3, zinc, calcium, and even a small amount of iron.

Just remember to keep the peel on the zucchini, because there is where most of its fiber is stored.



## Asparagus



Not a fan of zucchini? No problem. Asparagus contains similar benefits and is also a very rich source of both lutein and zeaxanthin. This green vegetable also acts as a diuretic in the body, making it useful for those trying to lose weight and appear slimmer. If you are retaining any water from too much sodium in your diet plan, simply adding some asparagus may help do the trick. It'll help to flush out this extra water you are retaining, helping you see better overall muscle definition.

Consuming asparagus on a regular basis may also help to reduce your risk of three chronic diseases: cancer, type II diabetes, and high blood pressure. This risk reduction is thanks to asparagus' high antioxidant levels, as well as the fact that this food appears to exert

beneficial effects on the beta cells of the pancreas that produce insulin.

There is also a particular compound in asparagus called 2"-dihydroxynicotianamine, which helps to inhibit the function of an angiotensin-converting enzyme. This enzyme plays a key role in blood vessel dilation, and therefore in blood pressure.

Asparagus tastes great simply boiled, added cold to salads, or served as an appetizer. For something totally unique and different, you can even try it pickled!

So there you have a closer look at 10 foods that can help to reduce age-related changes to your eyes and keep you seeing your best. Don't ever let yourself think that you have to simply succumb to the effects of aging. The truth is, you *do* have a lot of power when it comes to your health. Everyday actions such as taking care of your sleep needs, your nutrition needs, and your exercise needs can make a significant difference on how well you age and how you continue to feel.

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