



The Eye Health Diet

Mediterranean
& Anti-inflammatory



Why does food matter for your eyes?

What you eat can affect your eyes. Eating the right foods can help protect your eyes and keep them comfortable. A diet rich in anti-inflammatory and antioxidant nutrients supports the surface of the eye and the macula (the part of the retina responsible for sharp vision).

A Mediterranean-style diet is a great way to support overall eye health is an evidence-based approach to eye nutrition.

Eat most days

Vegetables & fruit:

Minimum 5 portions (dark leafy greens, colourful veg, berries). Choose in-season and locally-grown foods, where possible, to support sustainable food systems and optimize the nutrient-density of the foods consumed.

Wholegrains:

Such as oats, wholewheat, brown rice, quinoa.

Legumes:

Minimum 4 times per week, such as lentils, chickpeas, beans.

Extra virgin olive oil

Extra virgin olive oil as primary cooking and finishing fat (e.g. dressings)

Nuts & seeds

Nuts & seeds such as walnuts, almonds, chia and flax seeds.

Oily fish 2–3/week:

Think SMASH: salmon, mackerel, anchovies sardines, herring.

Fortified dairy

Fortified dairy/plant milks- preferably fermented options like yogurt and kefir; eggs; sensible sunlight for vitamin D.

Herbs and spices:

Turmeric, ginger have natural anti-inflammatory compounds.



Limit the following to support eye health:



- ⊘ Highly or ultra-processed foods such as packaged snacks, pastries, and fast food.
- ⊘ Sugary drinks including sodas and sweetened juices.
- ⊘ Excess fried foods and oils high in omega-6 fatty acids (like corn, sunflower, and soybean oils).
- ⊘ Red and processed meats- opt instead for lean poultry or plant-based proteins.
- ⊘ Excess alcohol- keep intake moderate. Most people can consider reducing alcohol intake or not drinking alcohol at all.
- ⊘ Sodium- reduce salt intake to help maintain overall health.
- ⊘ High-glycemic foods that can cause rapid spikes in blood sugar. These include refined carbohydrates such as white bread and pastries.

By limiting these foods and ingredients, you may help reduce inflammation and oxidative stress, both of which can negatively impact eye health.

Additional Tips

- 💡 **Daily hydration:** Drink water regularly (aim for pale-straw colored urine) or unsweetened tea/coffee; sparkling water; avoid sugary beverages.
- 💡 **Cook** more often than you eat out to ensure you're in control of all the ingredients you choose. A whole diet pattern supports eye-health.
- 💡 Participate in regular **physical activity**, ideally with others and by moving your body in a way that you enjoy.
- 💡 **Smoking:** If you currently smoke, consider seeking support to quit-stopping smoking at any stage can help protect your eyes and overall health. Avoid starting smoking, as it can significantly increase your risk of eye diseases and other health problems.



Supplementation

Supplements may be considered when it is difficult to achieve optimal levels of certain nutrients through diet alone, helping to support overall and eye health. Discuss a personalized supplement regime with your clinician.

For example:

- Omega-7 sources in the diet are not widely consumed. e.g. Sea Buckthorn berries
- Vitamin D supplementation may also be required, as many people are at risk of deficiency e.g. those with limited exposure to the sun.
- Clinically meaningful levels of carotenoids can be difficult to achieve in the diet through food alone.
- Consider omega-3 supplement if not consuming fish regularly.

Key Nutrients for Eyes

Omega-7 fatty acids

- Palmitoleic acid is present in sea buckthorn oil and macadamia nuts; often not widely consumed in the diet.
- Omega-7 supports moisture in mucous membranes, including the eyes, helping with comfort.
- Studies on Sea buckthorn oil have been shown to support a normal inflammatory response and tear secretion.



Key Nutrients for Eyes

Omega-3 fatty acids



- EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) are types of omega-3 fatty acids found in oily fish (salmon, sardines).
- Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) is found in some seeds (chia, flax).
- Omega-3, namely EPA and DHA, helps keep your tears healthy and supports the oily layer that prevents evaporation.
- A higher ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids is associated with increased dry eye risk. Aim to increase omega-3 intake while moderating omega-6 sources (corn oil, soybean oil, processed foods).

Antioxidants (C, E, carotenoids):

- Antioxidants are natural substances found in foods that help protect your body's cells from damage.
- Every day, your body produces "free radicals" – unstable molecules that can harm cells, including those in your eyes.
- Antioxidants neutralize these free radicals, reducing stress and helping keep your eyes healthy.
- Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits, berries, peppers. Vitamin E is found in nuts, seeds, vegetable oils.



Polyphenols



- Powerful plant compounds in berries, green tea, olive oil, and colorful vegetables.
- They help fight oxidative stress and inflammation, which can affect eye health.

Key Nutrients for Eyes

Carotenoids



- Carotenoids are powerful plant pigments found in colorful vegetables such as leafy greens, peppers, and berries.
- Key carotenoids for eye health include lutein, zeaxanthin, and astaxanthin.
- These nutrients help protect the eyes from oxidative stress and support the health of the retina.
- Because carotenoids are fat-soluble, it's important to consume them with a source of healthy fat (such as olive oil or nuts) to enhance their absorption and maximize their benefits for eye health.

Vitamin A:

- Essential for tear production and ocular surface health.
- Found in liver, eggs, dairy, and orange/yellow vegetables.



Vitamin D:



- Supports overall eye health; sources include sensible sunlight exposure, fortified dairy or plant milks, and eggs.



Sample Menu

Breakfast

- Spinach Omelette, cooked in olive oil.
With wholegrain bread
- Green Tea
- Berries

Mid-Morning Snack:

- Handful of pistachios or walnuts (1 ounce)
- Fermented yogurt



Lunch:

- Large mixed green salad with kale, spinach, and colorful vegetables
- Grilled salmon (4 ounces) or sardines
- Olive oil and lemon dressing
- Whole grain bread

Afternoon Snack:

- Carrot sticks with hummus
- Small handful of goji berries

Dinner:

- Sautéed Swiss chard and shrimp in olive oil with garlic
- Quinoa or brown rice
- Roasted yellow/orange peppers

Evening (optional):

- Herbal tea or small serving of dark berries

