

# Eat right to protect your sight

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Oily fish, broccoli and berries may benefit your eyes, expert says.

(HealthDay)—A number of nutrients can help keep your eyes healthy, and some may even improve your eyesight, an eye doctor says.

It's particularly important to eat a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, said Dr. James McDonnell, a pediatric ophthalmologist at Loyola University Health System in Maywood, Ill.

"Make a colorful plate, especially with greens, blues and reds. Certain foods have distinct benefits for the eyes in addition to overall health, including many of the trendy superfoods such as kale, broccoli and sweet potatoes," he said in a Loyola news release.

McDonnell said healthy eating might help protect you from cataracts, [macular degeneration](#)—a leading cause of vision loss in older

Americans—and even blindness.

He listed several nutrients that are especially good for your eyes.

**Astaxanthin.** "This supernutrient protects eyes from developing cataracts, macular degeneration and blindness," McDonnell said. "Seaweed and wild, rather than farmed, salmon are excellent choices high in astaxanthin. It also aids in so many aspects of wellness that astaxanthin is my top recommendation for incorporation into your diet."

**Omega-3.** This fatty acid contained in fish protects against dry [eye](#) and age-related macular degeneration, he said.

"Studies show that individuals who ate oily fish such as tuna, sardines, herring and salmon at least once a week were 50 percent less likely to develop neovascular [wet] macular degeneration than those who ate fish less than once per week," McDonnell said.

**Anthocyanins.** "Blueberries, bilberries and especially black currants contain high amounts of anthocyanins and help to maintain the health of the cornea and blood vessels in every part of the eye," McDonnell said. "They also help reduce the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration as well as decrease inflammatory eye disease and diabetic retinopathy."

**Vitamin D.** "Safe sun exposure, fish oils, fatty fish and, to a lesser extent, beef liver, cheese, egg yolks and certain mushrooms contain this master hormone, which acts on more than 4,000 genes," McDonnell said. He added that vitamin D3 supplementation has been shown to help prevent age-related macular degeneration, reduce retinal inflammation and improve vision.

**Zeaxanthin.** This nutrient, which McDonnell said reduces the risk of [age-related macular degeneration](#), is found in dark green vegetables such

as kale, broccoli, collards, raw spinach and romaine lettuce. "Lightly cooking these vegetables increases your body's ability to absorb these nutrients," McDonnell said.

**Bioflavonoids.** Found in tea, red wine, citrus fruits and cherries, bioflavonoids may lower the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration, he said. And beta-carotene, contained in carrots, [sweet potatoes](#), spinach, kale and butternut squash, protects you against night blindness and dry eyes, the eye doctor noted.

**Lutein.** This nutrient is also good for your eyes. "The best source is from organic eggs laid by pastured organic hens. You can also take supplements made from marigold flowers," McDonnell said.

**More information:** The U.S. National Eye Institute has more about [healthy eyes](#).

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