

Poor diet causes blindness in a young 'fussy eater'

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A poor diet caused a young patient's blindness, according to a case report published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. According to the authors, nutritional optic neuropathy should be considered in any patient with unexplained vision symptoms and poor diet, regardless of BMI.

The risks for poor cardiovascular health, obesity, and cancer associated with junk food consumption are well known, but poor nutrition can also permanently damage the nervous system, particularly vision. Nutritional optic neuropathy is a dysfunction of the optic nerve usually caused by malabsorption, drugs, or [poor diet](#) combined with alcoholism and/or smoking. It is rare in developed countries. The condition is potentially reversible if caught early. But if left untreated, it leads to permanent blindness.

Researchers from Bristol Eye Hospital, Bristol, United Kingdom report the case of a 14-year-old patient who first visited his [family physician](#) complaining of tiredness. Aside from being labeled a "fussy eater," the boy had a normal BMI and took no medications. Tests showed macrocytic anemia and low vitamin B12 levels, which were treated with vitamin B12 injections and dietary advice. By age 15 years, the patient had developed [sensorineural hearing loss](#) and vision symptoms, but no cause was found. By age 17, the patient's vision had become progressively worse, to the point of blindness. The physicians investigated the patient's nutrition and found vitamin B12 deficiency, low copper and selenium levels, a high zinc level, and markedly reduced vitamin D level and bone mineral density. The patient confessed that

since [elementary school](#), he had avoided foods with certain textures and only ate French fries, Pringles, white bread, processed ham slices, and sausage. By the time his condition was diagnosed, the patient had permanently impaired vision.

More information: *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2019).
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