

# Healthy You

FAST FACTS FOR YOUR HEALTH

## 7 Foods That Feed Your Eyes

Good nutrition and good health go hand in hand, and some nutrients are especially good for your eyes. In fact, research shows that food can help lower your risk for eye diseases.

The Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS), which was originally published in 2001 and updated in 2013, provided groundbreaking new information linking certain nutrients to eye health. The research concluded that certain combinations of nutrients, including omega-3 fatty acids, lutein, beta carotene, zinc, copper, zeaxanthin, vitamin C and vitamin E, may lower the risk of eye problems due to aging by 25%.

That's reason enough to fill your plate with vision-friendly foods. Read on for our top 7 foods and food groups for eye health below. As an added bonus: Eating for eye health supports an overall healthy diet, too.

1. **Orange produce:** Many orange fruits and veggies contain vitamin A, a key nutrient that promotes retina health and eye moisture. Carrots, cantaloupe, apricots and sweet potatoes are all chock full of vitamin A. They're also rich sources of beta carotene, too.
2. **Fish:** Omega-3 fatty acids are great for tear health, and the nutrient is found in several types of fish, such as salmon, tuna, trout, sardines and anchovies.
3. **Vitamin C-rich fruits:** Vitamin C wards off the negative effects of daily life on the body, such as fighting the effects of sun damage on your cells. Citrus fruits, like oranges, are among the most well-known sources of vitamin C, but you can also get a healthy dose of the nutrient from strawberries, peaches and tomatoes.
4. **Leafy green vegetables:** It seems like every healthy diet contains leafy green veggies, so it's no surprise they're great for eye health, too. Foods like kale, spinach, broccoli and collard greens contain lutein and zeaxanthin. Researchers have found that these nutrients feed the macula, which is the central part of the retina, and helps you see details clearly.
5. **Beans:** All types of beans contain zinc, which support retina health and guards your eyes from harmful light.
6. **Nuts:** Nuts like almonds, walnuts, Brazil nuts, cashews and peanuts contain a double-dose of eye-healthy nutrients in the form of omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin E.
7. **Seeds:** Like nuts, seeds contain vitamin E and omega-3s, too. Adding a scoop of chia seeds, flax seeds or hemp seeds to a smoothie or bowl of oatmeal is a simple way to step up the nutritional value of your meals.

Eating a nutrient-rich diet is one of the best ways you can protect your vision and overall health for the long haul. It's also important that you complement your healthy eating with regular visits to your eye doctor, who can share additional ways food can support your vision.

***Need help finding an in-network DeltaVision provider?*** The Find a Provider Tool can help.

## **Live Longer and Better with Oral and Vision Health**

It's not earth-shattering news: Taking proactive steps to preserve your health will ensure you don't just live longer but live better. However, as you age, it can be a challenge to maintain your health and wellness. Here, you'll get healthy living tips that you can start making habits today — and it's never too late to put these practices in place. Plus, you'll learn about efforts Delta Dental of Iowa has supported to help older Iowans access the care they need.

### ***Get Stepping Toward Better Overall Health***

Practicing good oral and vision health support the bigger picture — achieving optimal overall health. One of the simplest ways you can support your total health is to walk.

Check out the Healthiest State Annual Walk, which is a 30-minute walk held on the first Wednesday of October all across Iowa. Just 30 minutes of walking a day can improve your overall physical, social and emotional well-being.

### ***Preventive Vision and Oral Health Tips***

Walking is just one way to be healthier. No matter what your age, preventive health habits promote your oral health, vision health and overall health. A lifestyle that includes a healthful diet, regular exercise and a few preventive habits will afford you a better chance of a healthy bright smile and clear vision for the future.



### ***Maintain your oral health through the years with these tips:***

- Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day and floss daily.
- Visit your dentist twice yearly for your regular dental checkup. Sticking to a twice-yearly schedule will ensure any big problems are detected early.
- Enjoy daily foods rich in calcium and vitamin D to maintain bone health and drink plenty of water.
- Engage in regular physical activity like walking, biking or strength training.
- Reduce your risk of oral cancer by avoiding excessive alcohol consumption, unprotected exposure to the sun and any tobacco use.

### ***Maintain your vision health through the years with these tips:***

- Keep regular eye exams with your eye doctor, even if you do not wear contact lenses, glasses or have vision problems. Talk to your eye doctor about how often you should have preventive exams, and keep him or her informed of any chronic health issues.
- Eating a balanced diet, enjoying regular exercise and drinking plenty of water helps provide the nutrients eyes need. On the flip side, smoking depletes your eyes of key nutrients, so quit smoking.
- Always wear UV-blocking sunglasses and broad brimmed hats to protect your vision while you're outside.
- Monitor your screen time and take breaks while working on your computer. Staring at TVs, smartphones, computers, and tablets can strain your eyes.
- If you're working on a home improvement project, wear certified safety glasses to prevent eye injuries.
- Get a good night's sleep. It helps keep your eyes moisturized and clean.

### **Supporting Lifelong Smiles**

If you or older Iowan you know struggles to maintain their oral health care, we encourage you to learn more about the Lifelong Smiles Coalition, which is an Iowa-based organization aimed at providing older adults across the state with greater access to oral healthcare.

Although better preventive dental care, advances in dentistry and widespread water fluorination have improved Americans' oral health, many older adults struggle to keep regular dental visits and miss out on the dental care they need.

The Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation has supported the goals of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition by committed more than \$1.5 million to the organization since 2015. These projects developed oral health care training and education for dental teams and the direct care workforce, and continue to expand dental public health initiatives for older adults throughout Iowa.

Learn more about the Lifelong Smiles Coalition.

When it comes to your health, it's the little things you do each day that make the biggest difference over the long haul. Inspired to learn more? Delta Delta of Iowa has a wealth of resources to support the health of Iowans of all ages. Visit our blog, A Healthy Life, for more ideas on how to boost your own health and wellness.