

## Keeping Eyes on Health

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Tick tock, the aging clock never stops. According to the American Geriatrics Society, seniors over 65 account for only 12% of the U.S. population, but a full 50% of the blind population. Egad, say it isn't so!

The primary culprits include age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts, and glaucoma, which respectively affect the macula, lens, and optic nerve. However, AMD accounts for more cases of blindness than cataracts and glaucoma combined!

Suffice to say, everyone should know about AMD, which affects the macula, a small and highly sensitive part of the retina that is responsible for detailed vision. Located at the back of the eye, the retina converts light signals to neural signals and sends them via the optic nerve to the brain for interpretation.

The macula relies on a very high rate of blood flow through its blood vessels. When blood flow is constricted, the macula can malfunction and deteriorate, resulting in vision loss, whether you're trying to see at long distances, read fine print, see faces clearly, or distinguish colors.

What to do? To ensure adequate supply of oxygen and vital nutrients to the retina, it's important to monitor:

- *Smoking* -- smoking causes blood vessels, including those feeding the macula, to narrow and blood to thicken, much the same as in a heart attack or stroke.
- *Body mass* - being overweight is correlated with higher CRP (a inflammation-related protein increasingly associated with atherosclerosis) and homocysteine levels, corresponding plaque build-up, and thus higher incidence of macular degeneration
- *Antioxidants* - antioxidants protect against damaging free radicals. A lack of antioxidants, such as vitamin C, vitamin E, and lutein may increase the ability of plaque to stick to the blood vessel walls and damage tissue.

According to research conducted by Dr. Johanna Seddon of Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Public Health:

"AMD is associated with immune, inflammatory, and other cardiovascular mechanisms, and these results emphasize the need to adhere to healthy lifestyles for your eyes and your body overall."

Heart disease risks such as smoking, weight problems, and poor nutrition all increase the risk of vision loss. More on [Dr. Seddon's study](#) here.

### The Role of Lutein & Zeaxanthin in Eye Protection

In addition to healthy habits, you can also take a lesson from plants, which produce carotenoids not only to support photosynthesis, but also to protect against the damaging effects of the sun.

Research continues to confirm the importance of special carotenoids, lutein and zeaxanthin (yellow carotenoids found in high-concentration in the human macula and retina).

Lutein and zeaxanthin act like sunglass filters to protect your retina from oxidation. Research has shown that higher dietary intake of lutein is clearly (ha ha) associated with lower risk of developing age-related macular degeneration and cataracts.

The good news is that you can find both of these guardians of eyesight in our Eye Protection formula, along with eye-healthy bilberry and taurine.

Bilberry brings the active ingredient "anthocyanoside" (or anthocyanidin), which promotes optimum microvascular blood flow and interstitial fluid balances in the macula.

Taurine -- a non-protein amino acid found in high amounts in the retina -- has been shown to protect against retinal degeneration and has its own antioxidant activity to boot!

Visit our site for more on our [Eye Protection formula](#).

### General Antioxidants Critical to Eye Health, too!

With bad boy free radicals creating mischief and evidence mounting that oxidation and degenerative eye conditions are related, even the National Eye Institute is touting the benefits of antioxidants such as zinc, vitamins C and E, and beta-carotene.

[Scientists found](#) that people at high risk of developing advanced stages of AMD lowered their risk by about 25 percent when treated with a high-dose combination of vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, and zinc.

Pssst: You can find all of these, and other powerful antioxidants like selenium, in our [Sam's](#)

[Plus D.](#)

Omega Three Fatty Acids Protect the Retina as well!

And, if you don't already have enough reasons to think fish oil is the cat's meow, [here's another](#) (this article talks about the role of fish oil in retinal health!).