

Eyesight and the importance of nutrition



Cataract and Age Related Macular Degeneration are the two leading causes of sight loss in the developing world.

The risk of cataract is increased by exposure to oxidative stress such as sunlight and smoking. It is estimated that consuming more anti-oxidants could prevent 30-50% of all cataract. Long-term consumption of vitamin C may substantially reduce the development of age related cataract according to one American study.

Age Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD) is an increasingly common cause of deteriorating vision particularly amongst people with light coloured eyes. Macular degeneration is caused by an accumulation of tissue debris and unwanted products in the retina.

Much of this process is due to oxidative stress, again chiefly in relation to sunlight and smoking. In October 2001 the National Eye Institute published the results of a randomised, placebo-controlled trial (the AREDS study) of high dose supplementation of vitamins C and E, beta-carotene and zinc given to patients with ARMD. The AREDS study involved following 3,557 patients for over 6 years. The most notable result was that a combination of vitamins and zinc decreased the progression of ARMD for 25% of patients.

The importance of healthy eating cannot be over emphasised. Particularly the consumption of leafy green vegetables and yellow and orange fruit and vegetables. However later in life we may not absorb nutrients as efficiently as we did in our youth, consequently the regular intake of nutritive and vitamin supplements will often be advised by your Optometrist.

For certain patients particular nutritive regimes for say, keratoconus, cataract, macular damage, “dry eye” and even diabetic complications may be appropriate. Please feel free to discuss this with your Optometrist at Kerr Eyecare who will always be pleased to advise as part of our holistic approach to eyecare.

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