

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent

### Green is for Eyes

If your vision is blurry today, let's hope that it's just from all the April Fool's Day jokes of last week! What you don't want it to be is macular degeneration. Age related macular degeneration (or AMD) is one of the leading causes of blindness, especially among those over 50. It comes on slowly. There is no cure or convenient treatment once it's happened. But the good thing is that there are lots of things we can do to help avoid it.

There are two kinds of AMD, wet or dry. Dry AMD is milder and causes less loss of vision. Little bits of fat accumulate in the back part of your eye. They blur the light coming to your nerves. But wet AMD can start with just a blurry spot, usually in the middle of your field of vision, and then keep spreading until all sight is gone. Sometimes what you may notice is that things that you know are straight, like the side of a door, look wavy. Or it might seem like the printer ran out of ink in spots all over the page because parts of words are missing here and there. Or maybe your close vision, or your side vision seems okay but just in the middle things are not clear.

What's happening in your eye is different. In wet AMD the eye grows new, extra blood vessels in the back of the eye. These blood vessels are not healthy. They leak. The blood and fluids that leak out of the new vessels make blisters. Where the blisters form the nerves are killed or disconnected. That's why there is no cure for it. We can't reconnect nerves from the eye to the brain.

If we can't cure AMD then we ought to work extra hard to avoid it in the first place, right? There are some things we can not change. For one, age is a big risk factor. But we don't want to die early! So the older we get, the more likely we are to have problems. There are some genetic risk factors that we can't change. We're stuck with the parents and grandparents we've had all our lives. And unfortunately, we women are more likely than men to have AMD because we tend to have more body fat.

But there are just as many things we *can change*. Smoking is one big risk factor for AMD, just as it is for some kinds of cancers. If you smoke, really work to stop! If you spend time outside, protect your eyes. Wear sunglasses, and/or a wide-brimmed hat. Especially if you are out on a boat where the light is coming at you from top and bottom, wear sunglasses.

And of course, since this column is usually about nutrition, there are foods to help protect your eyes. The bottom line for good eye nutrition is EAT LOTS OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. Vitamins C and E help protect our eyes. We know they are good antioxidants, and that is how they prevent damage to the eye.

There's another whole group of compounds that are as much or more important to eye health too. They're called carotenoids and are very like vitamin A. The main ones are lutein and zeaxanthin. Don't worry about pronouncing them, just eat them! They're in all kinds of dark green or yellow foods. Kale and spinach, all the green leafy veggies, green peas and broccoli, corn and green beans are all sources of these two protectors. Good news – we get as much or more from cooked vegetables, so cooked, canned, microwaved vegetables are great too. Very few of us eat the 8 to 9 servings a day of fruits and veggies that we should. So dig in, eat up, and protect your eyes!

The only decent food source that is not a vegetable or fruit is egg yolks. They're bright yellow, a hint of what they contain. Now that eggs are off the bad list for cholesterol, go ahead and have an egg, a whole egg, for your eyes.

Here's a recipe with double lutein – spinach and eggs. Serve with a big salad for even more eye protection. If you want to reduce the calories omit the pie shell and bake directly in a greased baking dish. Enjoy your better vision!

#### Cheddar Spinach Quiche

1 (10 oz) pkg frozen spinach	8 oz shredded sharp cheese, low fat
1 Tbsp all purpose flour	1 cup milk, skim or 1%
2 eggs, beaten	3 slices bacon
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper	1 unbaked pie shell, 9 inch

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cook spinach according to package direction. Drain in colander. Cook bacon until crisp, blot on paper towels to remove fat, crumble. Toss cheese with flour in bowl. Stir in other ingredients and mix. Spoon into pie shell and bake for 1 hour. Serves 4-6.

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