

## **'Eye Food' fact sheet – Transitions Healthy Sight Survey**

The recent national study<sup>1</sup> commissioned by Transitions Optical, to coincide with World Sight Day (8 October 2009), revealed that ninety-nine percent of South Africans know that carrots are a healthy 'eye food'. Much more than just an old wives' tale, carrots contain high levels of beta-carotene, which in the body is processed as vitamin A; a nutrient that helps maintain night vision.

Here's an easy to digest list of what you should be stocking your fridges with for eye health:

### **Egg-sighting news**

The most important meal of the day – breakfast – can be jam-packed full of goodness just right for sight. Eggs contain cysteine, sulfur, lecithin, carotenoids and zeaxanthin, which can protect the lens of the eye from cataract formation, promote vision and prevent some common causes of blindness.

The vitamin C found in orange juice and kiwis contains key antioxidants that eliminate free radicals that can cause eye damage<sup>2</sup>. Three kiwi fruits contain approximately 20% of a daily requirement of vitamin C.

### **Go nuts!**

Nuts contain minerals such as selenium and magnesium that support vision. Selenium stimulates the immune system, protects carotenoids from oxidative damage and helps to withstand degenerative age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts and diabetic retinopathy. Magnesium relaxes smooth muscles that regulate the outflow of aqueous humor from the inner eye. These properties can help delay the onset of glaucoma.

A cup of almonds or cashew nuts a day can be just what the optometrist ordered. One cup of almonds or hazelnuts also provides a sufficient amount of polyunsaturated fatty acids and vitamin E to help resist degenerative ocular and vascular alterations leading to glaucoma and AMD, especially in combination with zinc and vitamin C containing nutrients.

### **Under the sea**

Super healthy salmon provides a unique blend of compounds, which help protect the eyes from oxidation, replenishes omega-3 fatty acids in the body as well as restores vascular health and optical nerve responsiveness in the eye. The aging eye loses omega-3 fatty acids and increases deposits of oxidised compounds causing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a leading cause of blindness in the elderly<sup>3</sup>.

Oysters are called 'kings of zinc' for a reason! They contain on average 100 times more zinc than any other marine animals. Zinc is an essential component of many enzymes, including those producing light-sensing retinal from vitamin A. Without zinc, beta-carotene (found in carrots) will not prevent night blindness and other adverse effects of vitamin A deficiency. Zinc also helps to prevent other eye diseases caused by oxidative stress, including glaucoma, cataracts, and

poor night vision. To maintain healthy sight, just four oysters a day are sufficient to maintain healthy zinc levels and will probably help boost the love life too<sup>4</sup>!

### **Night life**

Carrots aren't the only vegetable that can help the eyes see better at night. In fact, there are even fruits that can do the job just as well. Melons, peaches, tomatoes, plums and red grapes contain beta-carotene too, which helps maintain strong healthy eyes by aiding the transmission of light signals in retinal cells.

### **Going green**

The green colour of spinach masks its high carotenoid content (usually recognised as a yellow or orange hue, such as that in carrots), although one cup of cooked spinach and cooked carrots contain similar amounts of beta-carotene. In addition, spinach is a champion in content of lutein and zeaxanthin. These two carotenoids accumulate in the retina of the eye, protecting it from UV light.

Broccoli is probably one of the best side dishes; one medium-sized cooked broccoli flower has a balanced composition of all the elements necessary for healthy vision but has almost no calories! What's more it contains one fifth the recommended daily dose of vitamins C, A, E, B2, lutein, and zeaxanthin.

### **Berry nice**

Blueberries can add to your daily dose of vitamin C. A cup of blueberries contributes to 30% of daily consumption of vitamin C required for good sight. The vitamins and minerals in blueberries can remarkably restore visual acuity after exposure to bright light and aids in quicker adjustment to darkness. Pilots used bilberry, a related berry, to improve their adjustment to night vision during the World War II. Today, blueberries will protect you from Computer Eye Syndrome (CES).

### **Two to mango**

Mangoes should be taken more seriously! They have numerous vision-protective nutrients such as large amounts of beta-carotene and vitamin A, and some rare carotenoids, such as cryptoxanthin. It also contains high levels of vitamin E (alpha-tocopherol) which help to reduce eye pressure and protect against oxidative damage in combination with vitamin C. A serving of one mango a day can potentially contribute to the prevention of night blindness, macular degeneration, and glaucoma<sup>5</sup>.

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Issued and prepared by liquidlingo Communications for Transitions Optical.

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1. The Transitions Optical Healthy Sight Survey was conducted by world-renowned market research company Ipsos-Markinor in March 2009. One thousand South African respondents partook in the survey.
2. Rhone, M. & Basu, A. Phytochemicals and age-related eye diseases. *Nutr Rev* **66**, 465-472 (2008).
3. Elvevoll, E.O., *et al.* Enhanced incorporation of n-3 fatty acids from fish compared with fish oils. *Lipids* **41**, 1109-1114 (2006).
4. Rhone, M. & Basu, A. Phytochemicals and age-related eye diseases. *Nutr Rev* **66**, 465-472 (2008).
5. Michikawa, T., *et al.* Serum antioxidants and age-related macular degeneration among older Japanese. *Asia Pac J Clin Nutr* **18**, 1-7 (2009).