

## Nutritional Supplements

There are many nutritional supplements available which claim to be good for your eyes. One of the formulations has been shown to help people who are at high risk of developing wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD), by reducing the rate of worsening. It is not clear whether the other supplements that are on the market are of benefit or not. The general advice remains for individuals to eat a good balanced diet and not to smoke.

### Can nutritional supplements prevent or cure eye disease?

The Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS)<sup>1</sup> showed that one particular formulation (available commercially as Ocuvite Preser Vision AREDS formula) could help slow down the progression to advanced AMD if the patients were at high risk of developing the condition. However, for most people there was no significant benefit of taking the supplement. Since the AREDS study, several new formulations of nutrients have been developed and some are currently being tested. Until these studies have been completed we do not know whether these are beneficial in slowing down the progression of AMD.

Without definitive scientific evidence of the effectiveness of these supplements, the general advice is not to smoke, and to eat a good balanced diet which contains lots of coloured fruit and vegetables.

### Are there any dangers in taking nutritional supplements?

The formulation used in AREDS contained much higher concentrations of some of the ingredients than is normally recommended for daily intake. One of these, beta carotene, has been linked to an increased risk of lung cancer in smokers, and so the formulation is not recommended for people who smoke.

Vitamin E supplementation is associated with an increased risk of heart failure in patients with diabetes or vascular disease. It is therefore recommended that you discuss your individual case with your optometrist before taking any nutritional supplements.

### Is there anything else I can do to protect my eyes?

AMD has been linked to smoking and obesity so we would recommend that you try to keep to a healthy weight and stop smoking.

Although there is no definitive scientific evidence of the effectiveness of nutritional supplements for most people we believe that good health advice is to eat more dark leafy green vegetables (e.g. spinach and kale) which contain carotenoids (lutein and zeaxanthin) as these may help to protect your macula (the central area of your retina) from damaging blue light. We also believe that including oily fish in your diet may be beneficial for AMD.

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All our fact sheets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence and are regularly reviewed and updated. This fact sheet contains general information. It is always best to raise any specific concerns you may have with your optometrist.

