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HDHeartbeat

A Health Designs Newsletter



Eye Health: the Windows to Our Health

You may have heard the saying that our eyes are the window to our soul, but did you know they can also let us peek into our health? That's right, the network of blood vessels in your retina are dependent on the health of your heart as well as the greater network of blood vessels in your body!

Blood pressure occurs when the heart has to use greater force to push blood throughout the body. Unmanaged blood pressure can damage your eye's main blood supply (a condition known as retinopathy).

Blood clots that can block arteries also pose a risk for eye health. Arterial embolisms occur when blood clots travel and get stuck in the smaller blood vessels in the

brain or retina. When blood flow is blocked to the retina, our vision suffers and we can experience tissue damage in the eye or blindness.

Diabetes is a condition in which blood sugar levels are elevated by the body's inability to process it. Diabetes is linked to heart disease due to the damage consistently high levels of blood sugar do to the blood vessels. Unmanaged blood sugar levels can lead to diabetic retinopathy, blindness, heart disease, and issues of the kidneys.

Damage to the blood vessels in the eyes can damage the blood vessels in your heart which is why it's imperative we take care of both.

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Nutrition for Your Eyes: How Your Plate Can Protect Your Vision

A well-balanced diet isn't just great for your heart health; it can also protect your vision!

Vitamin A is essential for your retinas to turn light rays into images. Vitamin A also helps to keep your eyes moist and prevent dry eye. You can get plenty of Vitamin A by consuming orange-colored vegetables and fruits such as carrots, sweet potatoes, cantaloupes, and apricots.

Vitamin C helps to repair and grow new tissue cells. You can get Vitamin C from citrus fruits like oranges and grapefruits, peaches, bell peppers, and strawberries!

Vitamin E is another powerful antioxidant that preserves eye health by keeping blood vessels from clotting. You can find

Vitamin E in avocados, almonds, and sunflower seeds.

Lutein and zeaxanthin protect the macula, the area of the eye that gives us our central and most detailed vision. Add leafy green vegetables like kale, spinach, collards, turnip greens, broccoli, and peas and eggs to your diet to boost these benefits!

Zinc helps keep your retinas healthy and may protect your eyes from the damaging effects of light. However, zinc can decrease copper in your body, a crucial nutrient for the creation of new red blood cells. You can increase your zinc and copper intake with the wonderful world of legumes such as black-eyed peas, kidney beans, and lima beans, lean red meat, or poultry.

Spiced Winter Quinoa Bowls

- 1 C quinoa
- 2 C vegetable broth
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 C carrots, diced
- 1 C sweet potatoes, diced
- 1 C kale, chopped
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tsp cumin
- 1 Tsp coriander
- ½ Tsp cinnamon
- Salt and pepper to taste



1. Rinse quinoa under cold water and drain to remove bitterness and impurities.
2. Boil vegetable broth in pot and add the rinsed quinoa. Reduce heat to simmer and cook, covered, for 15 minutes until liquid is absorbed.
3. Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium heat. Add diced onion and minced garlic until translucent.
4. Add spices and cook for additional 1 minute to toast the spices.
5. Add diced carrots and sweet potatoes to the skillet, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes.
6. Stir in kale and cook until wilted.
7. Mix in cooked quinoa until combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

HD MONTHLY CHALLENGE

February is National Heart Health Month! Put on your best red outfit all month long to bring awareness to heart health!

Eye-Opening Myths About Vision

Let's clear up some facts about eye health! Have you heard of the following?

Myth: Eating carrots will improve your vision.

Vitamin A is essential to maintain healthy eyesight and is found in high amounts in carrots. However, your body only needs a relatively small amount of this nutrient for vision. Continue to eat Vitamin A-rich foods (like dark, leafy greens or brightly colored vegetables) with a fat for better nutrient absorption.

Myth: If you cross your eyes, they'll stay that way.

Our eyes were made to move in all different directions and won't stay crossed if you choose to move them that way. Crossed eyes result from disease, uncorrected vision, or from muscle or nerve damage.

Myth: Sitting very close to the TV can damage your eye.

Sitting close to the tv may cause eye strain and headaches. If you find yourself or your children habitually sitting close to the TV, it could be a sign of nearsightedness and should be looked at by an eye doctor.

Myth: Reading in dim light is harmful to your eyes.

Dim lighting itself is not harmful. Aim to have good lighting while reading to prevent your eyes from tiring out more quickly.

Myth: Using computers can damage your eyes.

Looking at a computer screen will not harm your eyes but can cause eye strain and dry eyes if ample breaks are not built in. Be sure to rest your eyes every 20 minutes by looking up or across the room.

20-20-20: The Golden Rule of Eye Health

If your eyes are feeling a bit more strained than normal during the day, then you could be overdue for a break.

Follow the 20-20-20 rule! Every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break, and look at something 20 feet away. Get outside and take a 5 minute walking break and see the sights around you to care for your eye and heart health!

