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## Dietary habits that harm your eyes

### Reminders for Sight Saving Month

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It is common knowledge that eye health deteriorates as we age. There are many factors, however, that cause your vision to decline prematurely and unnecessarily. Our modern lifestyle, specifically the dependence on digital technology, can cause Computer Vision Syndrome. This is characterized by symptoms of fatigued eye muscles, headache, blurred vision, red eyes, dry eyes, stinging sensation, double vision, and neck pain.



The other lifestyle-related factors that can negatively affect our vision include overexposure to sunlight, smoking, long-term use of steroid medication, and an unhealthy diet—one that promotes weight gain, high blood pressure, high blood glucose level, and high cholesterol levels too.

An individual who is a hearty portioner will always overeat. The excess intake of total calories from food will eventually lead to weight gain. Obesity and being overweight have been associated with insulin resistance. The body will require more insulin to regulate the blood sugar level. This condition is detrimental to the eye health because increased production of the hormone insulin causes the insulin-binding protein-3 to decrease, affecting the eyeball's length from front to back. This leads to the development of myopia or could make an existing condition worse.

Myopia is an eye condition wherein distant objects appear blurry while nearby objects are clearer thus the term short-sightedness. While genetics is a major risk factor in developing myopia, unhealthy eating habits and over exposure to gadgets and digital technology can contribute to the rapid increase in the number of individuals suffering from this eye condition.

Aside from practicing portion control in keeping your weight normal, it is also important to avoid refined sugars commonly found in sweets, pastries, and processed food like chips, cereals, and the like. Learn to read the ingredients list. Simple sugars are also known as high fructose corn syrup, cane sugar, glucose, dextrose, sucrose, sugar, corn syrup, caramel, and molasses. Instead, enjoy natural sugars found in fresh fruits and get your fiber from vegetables and whole grains like oats.

So, you got your sugar intake in control. What other aspects of your diet could harm your sight? You have to check on your fat and cholesterol intake as well. A higher total intake of fat has been found to increase the risk of developing cataract, as well as myopia. If your diet staples include mayonnaise, creamy salad dressings, fried fast food, and other food sources of trans fat and omega-6 fatty acid like shortening and margarine found in baked and processed food, it's time to cut down or avoid these.

Cataract occurs when protein found in the lens of the eye clump causing part of the lens to be clouded. When this happens, the vision becomes blurred. Discoloration of the lens could also happen, which leads to a tinted vision.

A bit of sad news for dairy and meat lovers out there. Increased intake of cheese, milk, and other dairy products, as well as beef, pork, and lamb are also associated with cataract risk. Dairy contains the sugar galactose. Unfortunately, most people have low levels of the enzyme lactase after infancy. Therefore we cannot efficiently break down galactose causing its byproduct galactitol to accumulate in the lens of the eyes. This may contribute to the formation of cataract.

In summary, what you eat and how much you eat could potentially rob you of having clear vision. Go easy on refined sugars, fried and processed food,

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dairy and red meat consumption. Eat your yellow, orange, and red fruits and vegetables, including green leafy vegetables in addition to omega-3 rich nuts, seeds, and some fatty fishes like sardines, salmon, and tuna to promote better eyesight.