

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Katie Gravesen, DC

## Preventing Vision Loss Naturally

*Difficulty seeing is a common problem, especially for older people. In fact, after fear of death, loss of vision is the second-greatest worry among elderly people (Exp Eye Res 2007;84:229-45).*

*Dr. Gravesen encourages patients to focus on prevention. To that end, Dr. Gravesen has collected the following research on natural solutions to preventing vision loss.*



The statistics are sobering: 45 million people worldwide are blind, with 180 million having some type of visual handicap (Ophthalmology 2004;101:741-63). Nine out of 10 blind people live in developing countries. And, a staggering 80 percent of blindness is considered preventable.

### Chiropractic May Improve Eyesight

Research indicates that chiropractic care may improve eyesight, and, in some cases, reverse vision loss. Specifically, spinal abnormalities can affect eyesight, and correcting dysfunctional areas in the spine known as **vertebral subluxations** may promote optimal vision. Chiropractors, like Dr. Gravesen, restore function and movement to the spine with specialized maneuvers known as **chiropractic adjustments**.

In a comprehensive survey of Swedish



chiropractic patients, over 14 percent reported improved vision following chiropractic adjustments (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1999;22:559-64).

Another study documented the case of a female patient who had severe visual dysfunction caused by a brain aberration (Arnold-Chiari malformation). After chiropractic care, her capacity to see, read and perform smooth tracking eye movements vastly improved (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2005;28).

In another case, a 22-year-old man underwent chiropractic adjustments to correct vertebral subluxation and, subsequently, showed a measurable rise in visual sensitivity (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1996;19:415-8).

### Additional Research Suggests Chiropractic May Help

Even a degenerative ocular condition like glaucoma — a disorder marked by high pressure within the eyeball — may improve with chiropractic care. One study noted immediate improvements in a patient after chiropractic adjustments, with continued enhancement over the following week (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:428).

Another case study involved a patient who had endured vision loss from a facial fracture caused by a fall. After 20 chiropractic visits, the patient enjoyed complete visual recovery (*J Ma-*

*nipulative Physiol Ther* 1999;22:615).

### Healthy Lifestyles Ward off Vision Loss

Vision loss related to type 2 diabetes is a major cause of difficulty seeing. Fortunately, diabetes may often be prevented by making healthy lifestyle choices, such as focusing on proper nutrition, exercise and stress management.

And, research indicates that other leading forms of vision loss may also be prevented by taking these measures.

### Eat Right for Eyesight

A wealth of evidence reveals that nutrition plays a major role in preventing vision problems.

For instance, eating poor-quality carbohydrates, such as junk food, appears to be linked to the development of cataracts (*Am J Clin Nutr* 2007;86:1502-8).

The top nutrients supporting vision health include vitamins A, C and E, B vitamins, lutein, zeaxanthin, iron, zinc, copper, magnesium, selenium, iodine and omega-3 fatty acids.

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### **Lutein, Zeaxanthin and Antioxidants**

When people with age-related macular degeneration (ARMD) took a supplement containing vitamins and lutein (a pigment found in leafy green vegetables), macular pigment ocular density (MOPD) increased (*Optometry* 2007; 78:213-9). MOPD is used to measure macular degeneration and any thickening indicates improvement.



Other successful studies used lutein supplements, too, but also added another carotenoid, called zeaxanthin. This powerful combination increased MOPD significantly (*Ophthalmic Physiol Opt* 2007;27:329-35). Both lutein and zeaxanthin occur naturally in the macular pigment and help protect the retina from oxidative, or free radical, damage.

Research recommends supplementing with carotenoids and antioxidants (free radical-neutralizing compounds), including vitamins C and E, along with zinc and copper, to help stave off ARMD and preserve eye health (*Ophthalmology* 2008;115:324-333).

### **Omega-3s to the Rescue**

A ARMD study (TOZAL) added omega-3 fatty acids to the lutein-zeaxanthin-antioxidant mix. The addition of these essential fats helped stabilize ARMD in an astounding 77 percent of participants. This same group also showed improvement on vision tests (*BMC Ophthalmol* 2007;7:3).

Omega-3s also figured prominently in a glaucoma research project using animals. Results proved that supplementation with dietary omega-3s reduced intraocular pressure (*Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci* 2007;48:756-62).

### **Blueberries Help Protect Vision**

Another interesting study focused on blueberries as a possible source for eyesight support. Blueberries contain anthocyanins, which are water-soluble pigments known as flavonoids. One animal study found that, in as little as four weeks, these useful anthocyanins can be detected in the ocular tissues where they provide vision benefits (*J Agric Food Chem* 2008;56:705-12).

Other reports confirm that eating blueberries increases a person's antioxidant status and delivers a wide range of positive biological effects (*J Agric Food Chem* 2002;50:7731-7).

### **Start Early**

Parental nutrition in both father and mother is important to brain and vision development in babies before they are even conceived (*Nutri Health* 2007;19:143-61).

A raft of studies show that supplementing an infant's diet with an important essential fatty acid commonly known as DHA (docosahaexanoic acid) improves visual development (*Prostaglandins, Leukot Essent Fatty Acids* 2007;76:189-203). DHA continues to influence a child's maturing ocular system well through the third year of life (*Pediatrics* 2003;112:177-83).

DHA and another substance, called arachidonic acid (ARA), are found naturally in breast milk. This miracle

baby food also contains other undefined components critical to long-term stereoscopic development (*Am J Clin Nutri* 2007;85:152-9), which allows both eyes to work together to create one three-dimensional image.

Healthy eyesight in babies requires a steady stream of other nutrients, including B vitamins, vitamins C and E, iron, zinc, magnesium, selenium, iodine and copper (*J Nutri Health* 2007;19:85-102).

### **Take Charge!**

Ask the doctor for additional information about natural approaches to preventing vision loss. And don't forget: Regular chiropractic visits can help keep you bright-eyed by maintaining nervous system and brain health.

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### **Common Eye Disorders**

In developed countries, among the most common causes of vision loss are macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetes complications (*Am Fam Physician* 2008;77:1431-6).

**Macular Degeneration:** Thinning of the macula (center part of the inner eye's lining) results in the loss of central vision.

**Cataracts:** The lens of the eye develops clouding, which blocks light and can lead to vision loss or blindness if untreated.

**Glaucoma:** Pressure increases within the eyeball, resulting in loss of vision. Thankfully, current treatments are effective at slowing or halting the disease.

**Diabetes Complications:** Vascular strain caused by diabetes can damage blood vessels in the back of the eye and cause vision loss or dysfunction.