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Vitamins / Nutrition & Macular Degeneration

We now know that all eyes require specific vitamins and minerals to maintain optimum eye health and expected function, and in some cases, eye diseases resulting in sight-loss can result from deficient amounts of these nutrients. Current medical research confirms that patients with certain retinal degenerations, especially macular degeneration, meaningfully benefit from daily dietary supplements of minerals and "antioxidants" such as zinc, selenium, lutein, vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin E.

The best sources to find eye beneficial nutrients are green leafy vegetables, fruits, berries, cold water fish and nuts. Unfortunately, a typical diet does not provide enough of these nutrients in the foods we consume. As a result, products have now been formulated that provide proven nutritional recommendations according to a ground-breaking research program, sponsored by the National Eye Institute, called **AREDS (Age-Related Eye Disease Study)**. The latest research is now based on an extension of that study called AREDS 2 confirming that specific supplements can slow the progression of macular degeneration by as much as 25%. Here is what we recommend for our patients:

Look for a vitamin supplement that is based on the new **AREDS 2** studies. The ingredients in the combination of antioxidants and zinc used in AREDS included:

- a) Vitamin C 500 mg
- b) Vitamin E 400 IU
- c) Zinc Oxide 80 mg
- d) Copper oxide 2 mg
- e) Purified Fish Oils (Omega-3 Fatty Acids)
- f) Lutein 10 mg
- g) Zeaxanthin 2 mg

Questions:

- 1) **Is my multi-vitamin such as Centrum Silver, One-a-Day or Theragram sufficient to help macular degeneration?** No! Higher doses are required to slow down the macular degeneration. For most people it is okay to take both a multivitamin and a vitamin supplement formulated for the eyes.
- 2) **Should I also take lutein supplements?** Yes! We recommend taking 6-20 mg of Lutein a day. If you take AREDS 2 it already contains Lutein and no additional supplement is necessary.
- 3) **Can a smoker take these vitamins?** If you are a smoker avoid taking any formulations that contain beta-carotene (Vitamin A) since it will increase the risk of lung cancer.

- 4) **Are there side effects from taking these vitamins?** We recommend taking these supplements with a meal, usually breakfast and dinner to avoid gastro-intestinal side-effects. There is a slightly higher incidence of urinary tract symptoms or problems associated with the excess zinc.
- 5) **What else should I do to help slow down macular degeneration?**
- a. Don't smoke!
 - b. Wear sunglasses to block UV light.
 - c. Eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables especially dark green leafy vegetables like spinach greens, Swiss chard and kale. (Note: patients taking coumadin (warfarin) should not eat these vegetables as they will interfere with the intended effects of coumadin.) Eat a low fat and a low cholesterol diet. A diet containing fish is also helpful.
 - d. For more information,... <http://www.nei.nih.gov/amd/faqs.asp#1>