Make good choices today for healthy eyesight in the future: NetWellness

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Did you know that healthy habits not only affect your waistline, they can also help save your sight? You can lower your risk for blinding eye diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration, by taking steps to ensure your overall health.

AMD is the leading cause of uncorrectable vision loss and blindness for those ages 65 and older in the United States. It causes a loss of central vision, usually in both eyes. This can result in problems with reading and seeing small details. You may notice distorted, wavy lines, a dark or empty spot in the center of your vision, or just blurry text. Over time, your vision can get much worse.

Special treatments can stop the progression or improve some forms of macular degeneration. According to the National Eye Institute, zinc, vitamins C and E, and beta carotene have been shown to help slow down the progression of macular degeneration. The research is promising, but there’s still no cure. To help cope with AMD, people struggling with reading and other tasks can often benefit from a referral for low vision rehabilitation.

You can make healthy choices to reduce your risk of developing AMD.

**Avoid smoking, quit if you can.** Avoiding smoking is essential to maintaining healthy vision. Research shows that smokers are up to four times more likely than nonsmokers to be diagnosed with AMD. And, nonsmokers living with smokers almost double their risk of developing AMD through secondhand smoke. The World Health Organization names smoking as the only modifiable risk factor (one that you can change) for AMD.

**Eat healthy.** Eating a diet filled with green leafy vegetables rich in lutein
may also help lessen the risk of AMD. Lutein is a naturally occurring molecule found in vegetables such as spinach, kale and collard greens. It can also be found in corn, egg yolks and other vegetables and fruits. Frequently eating nuts or fish, such as salmon, tuna or mackerel, may also help reduce your risk.

**Trim the bad fats.** Avoiding foods with high-fat content, such as processed baked goods, may also be helpful, according to the AMD Alliance International. A high-fat, high-cholesterol diet can lead to fatty plaque deposits in the macular vessels, which can hamper blood flow. Research has indicated that those consuming red meat at least 10 times a week were at a 47 percent higher risk for AMD.

Other steps that may help reduce risk for AMD include:

- controlling blood pressure and cholesterol.
- staying active and exercising regularly.
- getting a complete eye exam from an eye care professional.

Overall, the message is clear: Make sure you lead a healthy life -- it can help lead to healthy vision.

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