



Cataract Awareness Month

Cataracts can affect anyone. Cataracts are a clouding of the lens of the eye, which prevents passage of light into the eye.

Although most people do not show symptoms of cataracts until at least the age of 40, cataracts can also affect young adults or even children. Heredity, disease, eye injury and smoking could cause cataracts to develop at an earlier age.

There is no proven way to prevent age-related cataracts. However, choosing a healthy lifestyle can slow the progression of cataracts. Some ways to delay the progression of cataracts include avoiding smoking, reducing exposure to UV rays, eating healthy foods, and wearing proper eye protection to avoid eye injury.

Most age-related cataracts develop gradually, and as a result, many people do not notice signs or changes when cataracts first develop.

Cataract symptoms progress over time and can include:

- Painless cloudy, blurry or dim vision
- More difficulty seeing at night or in low light
- Sensitivity to light and glare
- Seeing halos
- Faded or yellow colors
- Double vision within one eye
- A need for bright light for reading



The solution to cataracts is cataract surgery, which requires a surgeon to remove the deteriorated lens and replace it with an artificial lens called an intraocular lens or IOL. Over 3 million Americans undergo cataract surgery annually, making it one of the most common surgeries in the United States.

Cataract surgery is one of the safest and most effective surgeries with a success rate of 95 percent. Your surgeon will remove your clouded lens and replace it with an intraocular lens (IOL). Only a miniscule incision in the cornea is necessary to do this procedure, and it can be completed in about 15 minutes in an outpatient surgery center.

Although the exact cause of cataracts is unclear, research suggests that free radicals, or oxidation, may be to blame. Free radicals are unstable chemicals formed in the body when we are exposed to environmental toxins. Oxidation can damage the proteins and enzymes in the lens of the eye and cause cataracts to form.

If free radicals are the villain, antioxidants are the ultimate superhero. Antioxidants are molecules that neutralize free radicals before cell damage occurs. The most prominent antioxidants are:

- Vitamin E
- Beta-carotene
- Vitamin C
- Selenium

Since the body cannot synthesize antioxidants, they must be incorporated into the diet. This is the perfect time of year to find fresh fruits and vegetables that are high in antioxidants that protect your eyes from cataracts.

Vitamin E has many other health benefits besides protection against cataracts. It protects your skin from UV rays, allows cells to communicate with one another and protects you from prostate cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Good sources of vitamin E are sunflower seeds, almonds, spinach, dark leafy greens, & papaya.

Beta-carotene is known to protect against cancer and aging as well as prevent cataract formation. Because it is a fat-soluble vitamin, it is best to pair your food source of beta carotene with a fat like nuts or oil to aid in absorption. The best sources of beta-carotene are sweet potatoes, kale, carrots, turnip and mustard greens, spinach, and butternut squash.

Vitamin C may be helpful in fighting cataracts by slowing their progression. The American Optometric Association recommends at least 250 mg of daily vitamin C for optimum eye health. Five servings of various fruits and vegetables provide 100 grams or more of this powerful antioxidant, but there are a few vitamin C superstars. The green hot chili pepper reigns supreme with an impressive 243 mg/100 g serving. If you like to kick up the heat, you can get all your daily vitamin C from just four of these spicy little guys! Other good sources of vitamin C are guavas, bell peppers, dark leafy greens, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kiwi, papaya and the poster child for vitamin C—the orange.

Selenium can be found in nuts, like Brazil nuts and walnuts; many fresh and saltwater fish, like tuna, cod, red snapper, and herring; beef and poultry; and grains.



HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time



NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH

Planning ahead can help keep you and your family safe if there's an emergency, like a natural or man-made disaster. Examples of emergencies include:

- Natural disasters like floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes
- Flu pandemics (flu outbreaks that spread around the world)
- Blackouts (where large areas lose power)
- Terrorist attacks

Emergencies can happen at any time, so it's important to make sure you and your family are ready. Here's what you can do:

- Get an emergency supply kit.
- Make a family emergency plan.
- Learn what to do in different types of emergencies.

Make an emergency supply kit.

Gather supplies like water, medicines, and blankets. You won't have time to search or shop for these supplies during an emergency, so put your kit together now. Make sure your kit includes:

- Water for at least 3 days. You'll need at least 1 gallon of water a day for each person. Don't forget water for your pets, too!
- Food for at least 3 days. Choose foods that don't need to be kept cold and that you don't need to cook – like energy bars, peanut butter, crackers, and canned fruit. Don't forget a can opener!
- Prescription medicine that you take every day, like heart or diabetes medicine.
- First aid kit to treat cuts, burns, and other basic injuries. (You can also buy first aid kits at many stores.)
- Battery-powered radio with extra batteries or a hand crank radio.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Whistle to call for help.

Keep your emergency supplies together in a backpack, bag, or easy-to-carry container. Use a waterproof container if possible. Store your supplies in a place that's easy to reach.

Make a plan.

It's important to make a plan in case your family members aren't in the same place when disaster strikes. Be sure to decide on an emergency contact – a person that each member of your family knows to call during an emergency. Ask everyone to keep a copy in their wallet, purse, or backpack.

The American Red Cross is a great resource of information to help you prepare your family for an emergency. Refer to <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/be-red-cross-ready/make-a-plan> for help.



Expect the Unexpected.

