



## **Experts Declare Need for Eye Health Education**

### ***Ocular Nutrition Society Issues Consensus Statement from Experts in Ophthalmology, Optometry, Diet and Nutrition, and Primary Care***

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CARLSBAD, CA — The Ocular Nutrition Society (ONS) today issued the following statement regarding the urgent need to educate Americans about the role of nutrition in supporting eye health.

*Significant scientific evidence exists to support the role of certain nutrients, including zinc, vitamins C and E, lutein, zeaxanthin and long-chain omega-3 fatty acids, to help promote health in the aging eye.*

*The displacement of nutrient-dense foods by processed foods in the Western, or American, diet is disconcerting, as is the lack of awareness of key nutrients and other modifiable risk factors that impact eye health. The lack of key diet-derived nutrients is a modifiable risk factor for protecting eye health, and eating a healthy diet rich in these nutrients is encouraged.*

*With regard to dietary supplementation, many leading multivitamin and mineral supplements do not contain lutein, zeaxanthin or long-chain omega-3 fatty acids. Taking a supplement specifically designed for eye health that contains these key nutrients, in addition to a general nutritional supplement, may therefore be a better approach to filling dietary shortfalls.*

*There is a need for guidelines that include nutritional recommendations and other lifestyle modifications to aid people in making better choices for protecting the health of their eyes as they age. As such, we support new efforts to develop such guidelines as well as subsequent educational initiatives designed to raise awareness of these recommendations among public and professional audiences.*

The statement is the consensus of a multidisciplinary roundtable of experts recently convened by the ONS to explore the role of nutrition in eye health. Experts from the fields of ophthalmology, optometry, diet and nutrition, and primary care reviewed current data regarding nutrients that support the health of the aging eye and the results of a recent survey that examined U.S. baby boomer attitudes and awareness regarding eye health.

“Eye health is a significant, but under-appreciated, public health issue. About 35 million Americans age 40 and older have an eye disease such as age-related macular degeneration, cataract, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. That number is expected to grow to 50 million by 2020,” said Jeffrey Anshel, OD, FAAO, and president of the Ocular Nutrition Society. “The goal of this consensus statement and its call to action is to help address this issue by providing greater education and guidance on steps Americans should be taking, including optimizing their daily intake of important nutrients, to protect the health of their eyes as they age.”

The impetus for action included findings from a recent nationwide consumer survey conducted by the ONS, which identified a lack of public awareness regarding the relationship between nutrition and eye health. The results of the survey demonstrated a lack of knowledge around this important but under-appreciated health concern. Survey findings included the following results:<sup>1</sup>

- Baby boomers (men and women ages 45-65) value their vision more than any other sense, but most are not taking necessary steps to protect their eyes
- There is low awareness of specific nutrients that are important for eye health
- Most respondents were not aware that smoking increases the risk of blindness

The National Eye Institute estimates that over the next 30 years, the number of Americans that experience eye health issues will double because of aging baby boomers.<sup>2</sup> The demand for vision care service is expected to flood the healthcare system by 2015 due to age-related eye disease and the diabetes epidemic.<sup>3</sup>

Global eye health company Bausch + Lomb provided support for the expert roundtable and the consumer survey.

For more information about the ONS and the survey findings visit [www.ocularnutritionssociety.org](http://www.ocularnutritionssociety.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Eye on the Boomer Survey. KRC Research. 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Age-Related Eye Disease Study Research Group. The Relationship of Dietary Carotenoid and Vitamin A, E, and C Intake With Age-Related Macular Degeneration in a Case-Control Study. AREDS Report No. 22. Arch Ophthalmol. 2007.125:1225-1232.

<sup>3</sup> Ocular Nutrition Society. <http://www.ocularnutritionssociety.org>. Accessed Dec 8, 2011.