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Macular degeneration is a major cause of blindness among older adults in western nations and is characterized by a loss of central vision. The May 2009 issue of the journal Ophthalmology *published a study showing a protective effect against age-related macular degeneration (AMD) when several nutrients are combined with a low-glycemic diet.*

GREATER INTAKE OF SEVERAL NUTRIENTS + LOW-GLYCEMIC DIET LINKED TO REDUCED RISK OF MACULAR DEGENERATION

Researchers analyzed data from 4,003 participants in the Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS). Information was collected on the subject's intake of several nutrients related to eye health, including vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc, lutein/zeaxanthin, and the omega-3 fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).

Glycemic index was calculated for consumed food items. Photographs of the macula of the eye (taken upon enrollment) were graded for severity and type of macular degeneration.

Participants with a high overall intake of the associated nutrient group, as well as higher intakes of low-glycemic foods, had the lowest risk of early or advanced macular degeneration. When single nutrients were analyzed separately, vitamin E emerged as significantly protective against the disease..

The study is the first to analyze the combination of multiple nutrient groups and a low-glycemic diet. Dr. Chiu, lead researcher on the paper and an assistant professor at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston, also noted that "although the compound score may be a useful new tool for assessing nutrients in relation to AMD, specific dietary recommendations should be made only after our results are confirmed by clinical trials or prospective studies."

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