



Nourish

ISSUE 87

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist

Eat for your Eyes in April

April is “Sports Eye Safety Month” and “Women’s Eye Health and Safety Month.” It’s also “National Gardening Month.” Can we connect these observances?

We can enjoy the colors and aromas of green grass and blooming yellow daffodils and red tulips in April. Our ability to see and enjoy the beautiful outdoors is at least partly affected by the food we eat. In fact, you can grow fruits and vegetables in a garden that promotes eye health.

Macular degeneration is one of the leading causes of blindness, and scientists have found that diet can play a role in preventing this eye disease. The macula is a region close to the optic nerve at the back of our eyes that allows us to see clearly and distinguish colors. It is composed of lutein and zeaxanthin, which are pigments found in colorful fruits and vegetables (and eggs).



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Consider an eye-healthy garden

Spinach, kale, broccoli, peas, red peppers, corn, carrots and winter squash are notable sources of protective pigments that nourish our eyes, and all can be grown in Midwestern gardens. Kiwis, oranges and eggs also provide nutrients and natural antioxidants that help keep our eyes healthy. Consider these tips:

- Fill half of your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables for good eye health and to help promote good overall health. Wear good-quality sunglasses.
- Wear protective eyewear if doing recreational activities, especially sports.
- Check with a healthcare provider before turning to supplements. Many eye health dietary supplements are available. Taking eye supplements such as lutein and zeaxanthin is not a replacement for eating an adequate diet.
- For more information, visit the “eyes” section of the Nourish website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/nourish.
- In summer 2025, we will provide the Nourish set of online course modules, including “Eating for your Eyes.”

NDSU

EXTENSION

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Question

I spend a lot of time on my computer. How does all this screen time affect my eyes?

Staring at a screen or computer monitor for hours can put a real strain on your eyes. Research shows that computer-related eye problems are very common. People using computers for work are not the only ones at risk, however. Those who use portable video games, tablets or other devices also can suffer from eye strain or discomfort. Try these tips:

- Reduce the glare. If the sun is coming through a window, move the monitor or close the shades until the glare subsides. Consider installing a dimmer switch for bright overhead lights or a lamp that evenly distributes the light over your desk.
- Reposition your desk. Computer monitors should be below eye level and about 20 to 28 inches away from your face to reduce strain on your eyes. Place a stand next to your monitor to hold printed materials so you don't have to look up and down repeatedly as you type.
- Rest your eyes. Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away from the screen for 20 seconds to give your eyes a break. Remember to blink your eyes to prevent them from getting too dry.
- Adjust your computer settings. If your settings are uncomfortable, adjust the font size, brightness and contrast on your computer until you find what is right for your vision.
- Visit your eye doctor. Regular exams will ensure your prescriptions are accurate. Be sure to mention any eye strain or discomfort you are experiencing. You may need new glasses, special computer glasses or special lenses that filter out glare.



Here's a delicious eye-healthy recipe that you can personalize with your favorite leafy greens.



Asian Style Cobb Salad

- 5 cups chopped romaine lettuce (or spinach)
- 1 (11-ounce) can mandarin oranges in light syrup or juice, drained
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cooked chicken, shredded (such as planned-over grilled chicken)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup grated carrots or cucumbers or radishes (or a mixture)
- 1 avocado, halved, seeded, peeled and diced
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, diced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup green onions, sliced

Sesame Vinaigrette Dressing

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce

Broil, bake or grill chicken. Cook eggs. Place eggs in a small saucepan with cold water. Heat water just until boiling. Remove from heat and cover; let stand for 12 minutes. Drain water and eggs into a colander. Rinse eggs with cold water to stop cooking. Use immediately. Prepare the dressing by whisking together all ingredients in a small bowl; set aside. Assemble salad by placing greens in a large bowl; top with mandarin oranges, chicken, carrots, avocado, eggs and green onion. Serve immediately.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 250 calories, 14 grams (g) fat, 8 g protein, 26 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber and 160 milligrams sodium.