

# Natural Health News

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EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS  
ELY, MN

## EYE HEALTH AND BEATING GLAUCOMA



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### STORE HOURS:

Tuesday – Saturday  
9:30 am-5:30 pm

**CLOSED SUNDAYS  
& MONDAYS**

### SPA HOURS:

By Appointment

Glaucoma is the “silent thief of sight.” It gradually erodes your vision and can ultimately result in blindness but has no early symptoms. Prescription eye drops and surgery can help slow vision loss but don’t cure the disease. The good news: nutrition and lifestyle strategies may give you an edge in fighting glaucoma. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S. and it is estimated that more than 2 percent of Americans age 40 or older have glaucoma. This disease can go completely undetected without regular eye exams. Glaucoma damages the eye’s optic nerve, which sends visual images to your brain. This damage is caused by a build-up of fluid in the eye that puts pressure on the optic nerve, retina, and lens. The accumulation of waste related to aging, high blood pressure, prescription drugs, and other eye-related illnesses contributes to the damage. Medical treatment is essential to prevent further damage but growing research suggests meditation and certain foods, supplements, and exercise may help lower eye pressure or combat glaucoma in other ways. Eating at least two servings of leafy vegetables—such as kale, spinach, and collard greens—was linked with a 20 to 30 percent lower risk of glaucoma in a large study. These vegetables are naturally rich in nitrates, which your body converts to nitric oxide. This gaseous molecule may help lower eye pressure by improving fluid drainage in your eyes. In fact, a nitric-oxide releasing compound is used in a new glaucoma eye drop. You can also find a couple of supplements at the Evergreen Cottage—SP Green Food and Cruciferous Complete—both contain whole food concentrates in capsule-form to make the consumption of these nutrients more convenient. Other aspects of good nutrition may also help. Higher intake of omega-3 fats—such as salmon and sardines—has been linked with lower risk of glaucoma. Fish oil supplements help fight inflammation and relieve intraocular pressure. Flavonoids—abundant in onions, berries, apples, citrus fruits, cocoa, and black and green teas—have protective effects on nerves and may help slow vision loss in glaucoma. Another advantage of tea is that it contains less than a third of the caffeine found in coffee. Studies suggest higher caffeine intake may increase eye pressure and worsen glaucoma. Caffeine has been shown to reduce blood flow to the eyes. Foods high in carotenoids—orange and yellow vegetables are critical to provide sufficient vitamin A to keep eyes healthy. Blueberries and cherries—these two super fruits contain *anthocyanidin* that can help fight free radicals that damage eyes. The European blueberry, **bilberry**, is known to prevent and even reverse macular degeneration. You can find a high-quality Bilberry supplement at the Evergreen Cottage which helps improve blood flow, supports eye function, prevents retinal damage and improves vision. Bioflavonoids from other dark-colored berries such as blueberries and cranberries will also be beneficial. They work by strengthening the capillaries that carry nutrients to eye muscles and nerves. Brewer’s yeast provides chromium, a mineral that has been shown to be beneficial for people with glaucoma. CoQ10—an antioxidant, can help prevent free radical damage to the eyes (300 mg daily). ~ over ~

Happy  
Easter

Magnesium relaxes the blood vessel walls and improves blood flow. It is important to avoid alcohol. Liver toxicity can lead to eye problems. Consuming sugar causes premature aging of eyes and increases the risk of diabetes and glaucoma. The same lifestyle changes that lower blood pressure typically also work to lower your eye pressure. It is important to lower your insulin levels. As your insulin levels rise, it causes your blood pressure, and possibly also your eye pressure, to increase. In time this can cause your body to become insulin resistant, and studies show insulin resistance—which is common in people with diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure—is linked to elevated eye pressure. The solution is to avoid sugar and grains as they will inevitably cause surges in your insulin levels. One of the most effective ways to lower your insulin levels is through exercise. Aerobic exercise, such as walking and cycling, is important for a healthy body, including your eyes. Walking 5,000 more steps daily was linked with a 10 percent lower rate of vision loss in a study of older adults with glaucoma. Meditation and relaxation techniques will also help. Mindfulness meditation can help reduce stress and support cardiovascular health, which will benefit your optic nerve. Meditation can be as simple as sitting quietly and focusing on breathing in and out. In a recent study of 60 people with glaucoma, meditation for 45 minutes daily for six weeks alongside standard glaucoma treatment resulted in a 9 percent drop in eye pressure compared to a control group using standard glaucoma treatment only. It is important to avoid trans fats at all cost. Trans fats interfere with omega-3 fats in your body which are extremely important for your eye health. A diet high in trans fats also appears to contribute to macular degeneration. Trans fat is found in many commercially-processed foods and baked goods, including margarine, shortening, fried foods, doughnuts, cookies, pastries and crackers. Kale, broccoli, brussels sprouts and egg yolks contain lutein, an antioxidant which is able to protect cells from free radical damage. Egg yolks also have zeaxanthin, another carotenoid, in an equal amount to lutein. Zeaxanthin is likely to be equally as effective as lutein in protecting eyesight. It is important to note that lutein is an oil-soluble nutrient, and if you merely consume these vegetables without some oil or butter you can't absorb lutein. Egg yolks are also loaded with these nutrients but once the egg is cooked they tend to be damaged. Therefore it is best to consume them minimally cooked as in sunny side or poach them with runny yolks.

Essential oils can also be very beneficial and improve glaucoma. **Frankincense oil** has been demonstrated to improve eyesight, **Helichrysum oil** improves vision and supports nerve tissue and **cypress essential oil** improves circulation which can improve glaucoma. Place a few drops of these essential oils in a carrier oil and apply twice daily topically on cheeks and lateral eye area. Slightly massage the oil on these areas but do not apply too close to your eyes.



Eye pressure fluctuates throughout the day, so periodic checks in your eye doctor's office may not give the complete picture. There is a home monitoring device on the horizon similar to how you can monitor blood sugar or blood pressure at home. In 2017, the FDA approved the *Icare Home* device for home eye pressure monitoring. It is available only by prescription, is costly, and insurance coverage is limited. If you have glaucoma and want to play a more active role in monitoring your condition, discuss this device with your eye doctor.

Organic Roots  *Bistro*

**BUSINESS HOURS:**

TUESDAY— SATURDAY 9:30 AM—5:30 PM  
Closed Sunday & Monday

Happy Easter from all of us at the  
Evergreen Cottage and Organic Roots!

