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Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a degenerative eye disease and the leading cause of blindness in adults over the age of 50. In a large recent study, participants with the highest intakes of two carotenoids - lutein and zeaxanthin - had significantly lower risk of AMD compared to those with low intakes.

MACULAR DEGENERATION RISK IS REDUCED IN ADULTS WITH HIGH INTAKES OF LUTEIN AND ZEAXANTHIN

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (**AMD**) is the most common cause of vision loss in developed countries. This degenerative eye disease causes damage to the macula (a small yellow spot near the center of the retina), which in turn impairs central vision. People affected by Age-Related Macular Degeneration have difficulty reading, driving, and performing activities that require clear central vision.

A report published in *Archives of Ophthalmology* adds more evidence to support previous research showing that the carotenoids zeaxanthin and lutein are protective against AMD. Dark green leafy vegetables are the primary dietary sources of lutein and zeaxanthin, but they can also be found in some colorful fruits and vegetables. Average dietary intake in the U.S. is only 2 mg/day, far below the 6 mg/day level most studies indicate as a minimum needed to reduce the risk of AMD.

In the current report, members of the Age-Related Eye Disease Study (**AREDS**) Research Group evaluated the diets of 4,519 AREDS participants aged 60 to 80 years. Retinal photographs were used to divide the subjects into five categories of macular disease severity, from individuals with little or no evidence of macular degeneration (the control group) to severe neovascular disease. Dietary questionnaires were analyzed for lutein, zeaxanthin, beta-carotene, lycopene, and other nutrients.

Participants whose intake of lutein and zeaxanthin were greatest had a significantly lower risk of AMD than those whose intake was least, and they were also less likely to have large or extensive intermediate drusen (deposits on the retina or optic nerve that characterize AMD). No risk reductions were associated with the other nutrients examined in this study.

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