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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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February 2024

The best foods for your eyes

A healthy diet will reduce your risk of conditions like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. But did you know the right foods can also protect your eyesight?

The macula sits at the centre of the retina at the back of your eye, and is responsible for detailed central vision. Macular disease is a leading cause of blindness and severe vision loss in developed countries, with an estimated 200 million people affected worldwide, according to the US National Institute of Health. Studies show that diet can help reduce the risk of macular disease, including macular degeneration.

What nutrients do we need for good eye health, and where do we find them?

1. Lutein and zeaxanthin

Lutein and zeaxanthin are antioxidants that play a specialised role in your vision,

says the Macular Disease Foundation of Australia, as they are found in high concentrations in a healthy retina. Get more of these nutrients in your diet by eating dark green leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach, watercress and silverbeet. They're also found in peas, lettuce, pumpkin, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, corn and eggs.

2. Omega-3s

These essential fatty acids are important to eye health and often recommended to help manage macular degeneration and dry eye disease. The best sources are fish and seafood, including oily fish like salmon, tuna and mackerel, and shellfish such as a crab, mussels and oysters. Aim to eat fish or seafood (fresh, frozen or canned) two to three times a week. Although they are not as rich a source as seafood, some plant foods also contain Omega 3s, including walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseeds, and canola oil.

3. Other nutrients

Other nutrients that support your eye health are:

- **vitamin E** – protects cells in the eyes from unstable molecules called free radicals. You'll find vitamin E in nuts, seeds, wheatgerm, sweet potatoes and wholegrains.
- **vitamin C** – may lower the risk of developing cataracts and slow the progression of macular degeneration. To get your daily dose of vitamin C, add oranges, grapefruit, kiwifruit, berries, capsicum and tomatoes to your diet.
- **zinc** – the eye contains high levels of zinc, which is important for good night vision and reducing your risk of cataracts. Get zinc in your diet from red meat, oysters and other shellfish, nuts and seeds.



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February 10 is World Pulses Day. Also known as legumes, pulses include dried beans, lentils and peas. Affordable and versatile, pulses are packed with nutrients, high in fibre and protein and low in fat. They help lower cholesterol and control blood sugar, making them one of the best foods for managing conditions like diabetes and heart disease. For more information visit www.un.org/en/observances/world-pulses-day

4 common myths about ovarian cancer

Ovarian cancer is the eighth most common cancer in women worldwide, with more than 313,000 new cases diagnosed in 2020 and three dying from the disease every day. Yet many myths still surround this deadly female cancer.



Myth 1. Ovarian cancer can be detected by the HPV screening test.

One survey found that nearly three out of four women falsely believed their HPV (previously called 'Pap') test screened for ovarian cancer. This screening test does not detect ovarian cancer, says Ovarian Cancer Australia. It checks for infection with the human papillomavirus that causes most cervical cancers.

There is currently no reliable population screening test for early ovarian cancer.

"People being screened usually have no signs of the disease. For cancer screening to be effective there must be an accurate test that can pick up early stage cancer when treatment is more likely to cure the cancer," says Ovarian Cancer Australia. "Research is underway to try and develop better screening tests in order to detect ovarian cancer at earlier stages and improve patient outcomes."

There are currently blood tests and ultrasound tests that may help with diagnosis, but these are not reliable as population screening tests.

Myth 2: The symptoms are so subtle you won't notice until it's too late.

"We're often told ovarian cancer is a silent disease, but that's not the case," says Canadian gynaecologist Dr Jen Gunter,

author of *The Menopause Manifesto*. "In fact, 90 per cent of people with ovarian cancer have at least one symptom; the most common are abdominal pain, bloating, and changes in bowel movements."

Other symptoms include feeling full after eating a small amount, needing to urinate often, unexplained weight gain or loss, excessive fatigue, and bleeding after menopause or in-between periods.

While many of these symptoms can be caused by other much less serious conditions, it's always best to get them checked out by your GP.

Myth 3: Ovarian cancer is incurable.

Ovarian cancer is considered the deadliest female cancer, but if found early the chances that you will survive for more than five years are over 90 per cent. That's why it's so important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer, and see your GP if you suspect something is wrong.

Myth 4: No family history means you're in the clear.

Family history is a risk factor, but it only accounts for approximately 20 per cent of ovarian cancer cases, says Ovarian Cancer Australia.

Getting older is the biggest risk factor. While ovarian cancer can happen at any age, the average age of diagnosis

is 64. Other risk factors include having endometriosis, a previous breast cancer, or diabetes; being overweight; and smoking. Menopause hormone therapy (previously called HRT) and not having had children can also slightly increase your risk.

It's important to discuss your family history of ovarian and breast cancer with your doctor as they may recommend having genetic counselling for further information and support.

Ovarian Cancer on the rise

According to Global Cancer Observatory's 2020 projections, by 2040, the number of women around the world diagnosed with ovarian cancer will rise almost 42% to 445,721. The number of women dying from ovarian cancer each year is projected to increase to 313,617 an increase of over 50% from 2020.

For more information visit worldovariancancercoalition.org



HOT HOT HOT

Top tips for exercising in the heat

As the temperature rises, so does our enthusiasm for outdoor workouts. With summers staying hotter for longer, how can you continue to exercise, even when it's hot?

If you're pushing yourself to exercise too hard when it's too hot, you don't just ruin your workout, you risk jeopardising your health.

Exertional Heat Illness, or EHI, is the term used for conditions that include heatstroke, heat exhaustion, heat syncope (fainting), and heat cramps.

It's vital to listen to your body and be attuned to symptoms of EHI. These include headache, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, and light-headedness. If you start to become disoriented, or you blackout or faint, it's serious and you need to get immediate medical attention.

This doesn't mean you can't still exercise outdoors in summer. You just have to follow some more considered strategies.

Strategy 1: Timing is everything

In summer, the timing of your workouts is just as important as the length and intensity.

Dr Michael Bergeron is a sports medicine researcher and is globally recognised for his research on exercise-heat stress. He consults to international tennis, basketball, soccer, hockey, and martial arts associations.

Dr Bergeron recommends steering clear of the sun's peak hours between 10am and 4pm, when temperatures are at their highest. Instead, he suggests scheduling outdoor activities during the cooler periods of the day, such as early mornings or late evenings. It minimises your risk

of overheating and maximises your performances—and your enjoyment.

When you exercise in the cooler part of the day, your body expends less energy trying to cool itself down, resulting in improved endurance and reduced risk of heat-related issues.

Strategy 2: Buddy up

Exercising with a friend is good for your motivation anyway, but in summer, it's good for your health too.

Dr Bergeron advises having a buddy with you when you exercise in the heat, in case anything goes wrong. Heat stress can creep up on you, and it can help to have someone else telling you to slow down or take a break.

Strategy 3: Drink water, the right way

Don't wait until you're thirsty before you drink. Thirst is a sign that you're already dehydrated.

How much to drink depends on the heat, the intensity of your exercise and your weight.

In advice for competitive tennis players, Dr Bergeron says you can lose between one and two and a half litres of water during each hour of competitive singles. Some players can lose up to 3.5 litres per hour. And although women generally sweat less than men, this is not always the case.

The key, according to Dr Bergeron, is to drink enough water before, during and after exercise.

- Before your workout, make sure you are well hydrated and avoid caffeine.
- During exercise, drink enough to feel comfortably full, even if you're not thirsty. If you're exercising for an hour or less,

water is fine. Much longer and you might need a carbohydrate-electrolyte drink that includes sodium.

- Afterwards, you need to replace lost fluid, electrolytes and carbohydrates.

Do menthol cough drops cool you down?

Mouthwash and cough drops are often used by athletes to cool down, but do they work and are they safe?

Menthol triggers receptors in your body which detect cool temperatures and can trick those receptors into thinking it's cool, even when it's hot.

This can override your body's normal alarm system.

The menthol does not actually change your core temperature, only your perception of coolness.

The pros and cons become clear: you can push yourself harder and increase your performance, but you risk overheating—which can be serious.

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) says menthol "may be beneficial" when exercising in hot environments for short periods of time. "For longer duration, you'll need other heat management strategies such as cold showers, chilled drinks and ice vests," says the AIS. "There is no clear consensus on safe and effective internal application of menthol use for athletes. Best practise protocols are yet to be established."

Suffering in silence: how to overcome loneliness at work

Feeling disconnected or lonely when you're at work doesn't just make your day harder. It affects your health, your performance and your chance of success. Yet a US study shows almost half of all employees don't feel connected to their co-workers.

And fixing this problem isn't as easy as making new friends at work. What if you work from home? What if you don't want to socialise with people at work, and you just want to get your job done as efficiently as possible? What if, like almost everyone (yes everyone), you find it hard to make friends?

Loneliness is a health crisis worldwide. According to a recent *Meta-Gallup* survey, almost one in four people worldwide feel lonely, women and men equally. Yet there's still a lot of misunderstanding about loneliness, including how it's caused and how to fix it. To understand how loneliness affects you at work at in your personal life, it's important to address some myths.

Myth 1: You can't be lonely with people around

Ending Loneliness Together is a national network of organisations in Australia committed to addressing loneliness. On their website endingloneliness.com.au, they say, "You can feel lonely in a crowd, lonely in your environment, lonely in a marriage, or unheard by others around you.

"Loneliness is a subjective feeling, often described as not feeling in tune with others or feeling misunderstood by people around you."

You might work in a vibrant group of people, but if you don't feel "in tune" with them, it can increase feelings of disconnection.

Myth 2. Only single or old people are lonely

You could look the part, have all the things, and still feel lonely. "Loneliness does not discriminate—it can affect anyone, regardless of their gender, age, or socioeconomic status," says Ending Loneliness.

Myth 3. It's because you're socially inept

Loneliness is often caused by external factors, such as the culture of your workplace, or the attitudes of people you're

with. People often feel ashamed of their loneliness, as though it's a personal failing, but even the most confident and bubbly people can feel lonely if the connection is gone for too long.

It's not your fault you feel lonely; but you can do something about it.

How does loneliness at work look?

At work, loneliness doesn't necessarily mean an absence of friends. It can also mean you feel disconnected.

Dr Sarah Wright is a researcher at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. She says, "Loneliness is not only about feeling socially isolated or lacking connection, it is also about not being seen, heard or understood, and feeling disconnected and marginalised from groups and institutions such as the organisations that employ us."

Loneliness also hurts your productivity. "Loneliness in the workplace is associated with poorer job performance and satisfaction, lower organisational commitment, and reduced creativity.

"Employees who are lonelier make more errors, take more sick leave, and express

How often do people feel lonely?

24% Very/fairly lonely

27% A little lonely

49% Not at all lonely

The survey represents approximately 77% of the world's adults because it was not asked in the second-most populous country in the world, China.

Global percentages are weighted to reflect the global population. Percentages may not sum to 100% as "Don't know" and no response percentages are not shown.



Almost 1 in 4 adults worldwide feel lonely



Global results indicate that the lowest rates of feeling lonely are reported among older adults (aged 65 and older), with 17% feeling very or fairly lonely, while the highest rates of feeling lonely are reported among young adults (aged 19 to 29), with 27% feeling very or fairly lonely.

Although many calls to reduce loneliness are focused on older adults, majorities of those aged 45 and older report not feeling lonely at all, while less than half of those younger than 45 say the same.

Source: <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/512618/almost-quarter-world-feels-lonely.aspx>

What type are you?

BetterUp, an international mental health and coaching platform, says people fall into one of three workplace connectedness profiles:

The Close Friend: 39 per cent of workers they surveyed said they prefer being friends with their colleagues—they talk about hopes, dreams, concerns; share personal dramas and wins, and reciprocally know things about colleagues beyond work duties.

The Friendly Colleague: 50 per cent of workers said they prefer being on friendly terms with coworkers. They might banter over tea in the morning or chat for a few extra minutes before the Zoom meeting begins.

Strictly Professional: About 11 per cent of workers say they like to keep things professional with coworkers. They don't need or want to share about families or hobbies.

BetterUp research found that, "regardless of your type, people need five friendly coworkers to feel connected, and around seven to feel belonging."

a stronger intention to resign," says Dr Wright.

Even extroverted, easy-going people can experience loneliness at work. Dr Wright says, "Once a person thinks they are excluded from social relationships and feels friendless, they start to feel negative emotions such as depression, sadness, and general meaninglessness when at work which is a vicious loop that makes them feel even lonelier."

How to create more connection at work

It can feel surprisingly confronting to set yourself the task of making friends at work.

Annie McKee, founder of the Teleos Leadership Institute and coauthor of *Primal Leadership*, says we are wired to protect ourselves from rejection, but we need to overcome the tendency to retreat. "Often I hear people say 'I don't like small talk' or 'I just want to get down to business.' That's usually just a defence."

Make it a priority

There's always another piece of work you "should" be doing, but remember that being connected at work actually helps you perform better.

McKee says, "Given a choice, people will turn to a project they need to complete, respond to an email, or check their phone rather than walking down the hall and talking to someone." So, you need to intentionally make time.

Prioritise connection before business, even if it's just a one or two minute chat at the start of a meeting.

Easy steps

McKee suggests starting small. "Let go of the notion that you have to be friends with everyone.

"You don't have to be the 'Hey Hello' person walking down the hall." Instead, select one or two people to start to connect with, even by just pausing to ask about their weekend.

McKee also advises to start with people who are known to be sociable and who you might have something in common with.

Start with work

It's OK to start by talking about work. You don't need to talk or ask about personal lives until it feels appropriate. McKee suggests asking someone more about what they're currently working on.

Do it by remote

If you're not in the same worksite, you can still apply the same rules. In an online meeting, spend a minute or two chatting about a shared experience. This is why the weather is just a well-worn topic—everyone can relate to it.

Be genuine

The only way to muck this up is to do it in a way that feels fake. Even if you're feeling out of your comfort zone, try to create connection in a way that feels authentic to you. If you're naturally an introvert, no-one expects you to start highfiving everyone in a group. If you ask someone how they are, listen properly to their answer.

Start with a smile

Even eye contact and a smile can make a difference, particularly when it feels genuine and special. Everyone can tell the difference between a fake or distracted smile, and a real one that communicates openness and kindness.

How to deal with **hazardous material at work**

Hazardous materials are essentially any substance that could cause harm to people, property, or the environment. In the workplace, these are often in the form of fumes, dusts, mists and vapour—things you can't always easily see.

And because their molecular size is so small, it's easy to inhale them or absorb them into your skin.

Every year more than 1 billion workers are exposed to hazardous substances, including pollutants, dusts, vapours and fumes in their working environments. In recent years, these incidents have increased, despite increased safety standards in most workplaces.

If your job requires handling hazardous substances, it's essential that you understand how to read the labels, what PPE to use and how to mitigate risks.

Understand labels

In general regulations require that, all hazardous materials in the workplace must be correctly labelled.

In English speaking countries, 'Danger' and 'Warning' are signal words. 'Danger' is used for a more severe or significant hazard, while 'Warning' is used for the less severe hazards.

There's an international system for categories and warnings for hazardous substances called Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, or GHS.

In most places, every hazardous substance should have a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) or similar (the terminology may differ from country to country), which includes information about the substance and precautions for safe use. In most cases, labels must include the name, address and contact telephone number of the manufacturer or importing supplier.

In Australia, every hazardous substance should have a Safety Data Sheet or SDS, which includes information about the substance and precautions for safe use. Labels must include the name, address and contact telephone number of the Australian manufacturer or importing supplier.

Wear the right PPE

Always take the time to put on the correct PPE for each substance you're handling. Exposure to hazardous materials can lead to acute and chronic health conditions, ranging from respiratory issues to long-term diseases.

Be prepared

Make sure you know the emergency procedures in case of a spill or exposure. Familiarise yourself with the location of safety equipment like eyewash stations and emergency showers. Report any spills or unsafe conditions promptly to your supervisor.

Speak up

If you notice something concerning or have ideas for improving how hazardous materials are handled, speak up. Under WHS laws in most countries, you have the right to raise safety concerns without fear of reprisal. It's about ensuring everyone returns home safely.

Better yet, avoid the hazardous substance

There will usually be regulations in place that set out specified risk control measures, to be used in order. The first measure says to eliminate the hazardous substance completely, if you possibly can. For example, you could use a physical process rather than a chemical process to clean something.



Ask an expert about ...

Q Are probiotic supplements worthwhile?

We're told that probiotics are good for your gut health, and the labelling is convincing. 25 billion 'good' bacteria in one tiny pill? That sounds like a great deal!

On the podcast, *What's That Rash*, Dr Normal Swan debates whether probiotics are worth it, particularly if you've recently taken antibiotics.

He says there's no doubt antibiotics can be harmful to gut health.

"Antibiotics kill bugs, and they don't just kill the bugs that they're intended to kill, they can actually knock around your microbiome in your bowel.

"These bugs in the bowel are really important for the way the body functions, from the immune system to even affecting how the brain works."

However, he said that while probiotics can work to improve the microbiome, each person's microbiome is very complex and unique to them.

The best way, says Dr Swan, is to eat a nutrient rich diet: "a wide variety of vegetables, not a lot of meat." This gives you a diverse biome that is also anti-inflammatory.

"You might as well just have a diverse diet and have the microbiome in good enough shape. In fact, there's a little bit of evidence that taking probiotics delays the recovery of the microbiome. So I would just be natural."

App of the month

Breathwrk

Controlling your breath can help regulate stress and anxiety, increase energy and focus, and help you fall asleep fast.

Breathwrk offers a large library of breathing exercises and classes, allowing you to master the same techniques used by psychotherapists, athletes, sleep doctors, neuroscientists and breath experts. You can fully customise your breathing experience, explore different sounds and music, feel the breathing patterns with advanced vibrations, and choose between different visuals.

Available free and with in-app purchases from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Why you still need to exercise when you're losing weight

Exercise alone doesn't help most people lose weight. But if you're losing weight through diet or weight loss drugs, it's still important to keep exercising, says a study published in *Nature*.

The study found that people who combine exercise with dieting can double the metabolic health benefits of their weight loss. Men and women with obesity and prediabetes who worked out while dieting improved their insulin sensitivity twice as much as people who only dieted, even though everyone lost comparable amounts of weight.

"These results demonstrate that regular exercise during a diet-induced weight loss program has profound additional metabolic benefits" compared with dieting by itself, wrote the study's authors.

Even though the study was small, the findings strengthen a growing belief among scientists that being physically active while we are losing weight changes our bodies in ways that dieting alone can't do.

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News Bites



Is it OK to hit the snooze button?

Snoozing, or using intermittent alarms to get in a few more minutes of sleep in the morning, may be beneficial for some people.

In a study of over 1700 adults published in the *Journal of Sleep Research*, around 70 per cent admitting to hitting the snooze button at least sometimes. The average snooze time was around two minutes.

A second study of people who regularly snoozed for around 30 minutes found that it either improved, or did not affect, performance on cognitive tests. It also did not affect stress hormone levels, morning sleepiness, mood or overnight sleep.

The authors say the finding suggest there's no reason to stop snoozing in the morning if you enjoy it, and may even help those with morning drowsiness to be slightly more awake once they get up.

Promising treatment for autoimmune diseases

Scientists have developed an "inverse vaccine" that may help treat autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis (MS). Autoimmune conditions occur when the immune system mistakenly attacks the body's own healthy tissues, and they are estimated to affect one person in 10. The vaccine, tested in mice, uses the liver to reset the immune response to antigens (toxins or foreign substances) that trigger autoimmune diseases.

When given to mice recovering from flare-ups, the animals did not relapse. The approach offers potential treatment for current sufferers and is part of the growing field of immunotherapy. Human clinical trials for liver-targeted vaccines against coeliac disease, MS, and type 1 diabetes are underway.

1 THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



Use your 'best' things

We all do it. We put aside our best plates, wine glasses, towels, clothes, and that bottle of champagne. We wait until it's the 'right' time to use or wear them, only to find that the clothes are outdated or no longer fit. Or the chocolates or special biscuits we were gifted are out of date. Or the scented candle tucked away in the back of a cupboard has now lost its scent.

Saving your stuff for 'special occasions' robs you of the now, says Dena Kouremetis in *Psychology Today*.

"The expensive designer velvet jacket looks just as good with a pair of faded jeans as it does with dressy pants," she says.

Drinking out of the good wine glasses and eating off fine china will make your meal more memorable and special—even if it's a regular Wednesday night stir-fry.

Then there's the environmental impact of not using your stuff.

A survey by environmental group WRAP estimated that a quarter of the clothes in British wardrobes hadn't been worn in a year, and that these forgotten items have a combined value of £1.6 billion (AUD3.06 billion).

"They are challenging from a sustainability point of view because you're not using them," says Mark Sumner from Leeds School of Fashion. "All the energy, water, chemicals and any labour that's going into making them is wasted."

The same could be said for most of the 'best' items you're not using.

EAT SMARTER

Buckwheat

Despite its name, buckwheat is not a grain but is actually a seed, although we tend to use the pyramid shaped kernels (groats) like a grain.

With plenty of other grains to choose from, why should you bother with buckwheat? Because it's:

- **Gluten free.** If you have coeliac disease or are intolerant to gluten, you can eat buckwheat. Just be careful to check labels if you're buying buckwheat products like soba noodles, as they may be combined with wheat.
- **High in antioxidants.** Buckwheat is rich in antioxidants, more so than many other grains. These include rutin (which may lower your cancer risk and improve your blood lipids) and quercetin (which may lower risk of cancer and heart disease). It's also one of the richest food sources of D-chiro inositol, a unique type of soluble carb that reduces blood sugar and so may help manage diabetes.
- **Rich in minerals.** Compared to other grains, the minerals in buckwheat are particularly well absorbed. That's because buckwheat is relatively low in phytic acid, which can reduce the absorption of minerals. Buckwheat contains manganese, copper, magnesium, iron and phosphorus, all essential and sometimes lacking in our diet.
- **High in fibre.** Buckwheat is rich in fibre, particularly insoluble fibre and resistant starch. These provide fuel for your beneficial gut bacteria, helping them increase in number.

To cook buckwheat groats for use in soup, salad or as a side dish, first rinse them well before simmering in boiling water for 10 minutes, until they're tender but still have a little bite. Drain well.



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