

# Vision Supremacy Naturally

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## Macular Degeneration and Cataracts

A 79-year-old lady once consulted me because a top expert in eye diseases diagnosed her as having macular degeneration. This disease is the leading cause of visual loss in Europeans and North Americans over the age of 50. It is thought to be the direct result of free radical damage to the macula, a small area located at the centre of the retina responsible for fine vision.

The lady was told that nothing could be done and, to quote the specialist, “You are going to go blind.” As it turns out, this was not only discouraging for my patient, but a completely wrong prediction. She was put on a regimen of diet changes and nutritional supplements with some amazing results. A six-month follow-up visit to the eye specialist showed complete clearing of the lady’s macular degeneration.

Here’s the nutritional advice I gave this lady:

The retina and lens of the eye are continuously exposed to oxygen and light radiation. This creates free radicals that can damage the retina leading to macular degeneration. The lens can also be attacked by these free radicals creating a cataract. In normal circumstances, the body uses substances called antioxidants to protect itself from free radical damage. Unfortunately, as one ages, there are less and less of these antioxidants produced by the body and, unless one can obtain these antioxidants from the diet or nutritional supplements, eye diseases like cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and other eye disorders develop.

## Diet

1. Eat more legumes, which have a cleansing effect due to their high content of sulphur-containing amino acids.
2. Consume more fresh fruits and vegetables, especially yellow vegetables. Berries are wonderful; particularly blueberries because of their high content of anthocyanidins, and cherries because they offer carotenes, flavonoids, and vitamins E and C. Carotenoids are most strongly associated with reduced risk of macular degeneration, especially lutein and zeaxanthin. The best sources are spinach, kale and collard greens.

## Supplements

**Lutein and zeaxanthin** – These are pigments that give vegetables like spinach their colour. They are fat-soluble carotenoids found in the retina that offer antioxidant protection for the retinal cells.

**Vitamin A** – Vitamin A deficiency causes blindness. The primary source of preformed vitamin A in the diet comes from animal sources. There is no vitamin A anywhere in the plant kingdom. In vegans, the body uses zinc to convert carotene into vitamin A. Vegans would be wise to check their blood levels of vitamin A if they are experiencing eye fatigue, blurred vision or any other visual problems.

**Greens drink** – Most green drinks on the market contain large amounts of various carotenoids coming from algae like spirulina, chlorella or super blue green algae.

**Vitamin C** – Vitamin C is present in the vitreous humor of the eye in concentrations 25 times the normal serum level and at 100 times the serum level in the retina. In other words, the body stores vitamin C in the eye where it is used as an antioxidant that prevents the lens crystallization that causes cataracts. Vitamin C in high doses also decreases raised eye pressures and has been proven to both prevent and reverse glaucoma.

**N-Acetyl-L-Cysteine** – Together with selenium, the body creates an enzyme called glutathione peroxidase, a very important eye antioxidant.

**Grape seed extract** – A very potent eye antioxidant that can improve eye circulation, reduce inflammation from allergies affecting the eye and prevent practically all eye diseases.

**Vitamin E** – Vitamin E works with selenium in antioxidant protection of the eye.



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**Selenium** – Works together with N-Acetyl-L-Cysteine to manufacture the important eye antioxidant called glutathione peroxidase.

**Zinc citrate** – Zinc is important for normal visual signal transduction in the retina. It is also a part of many enzymes involved in vitamin A dependent light reactions in retinal cells. Several published studies support the use of zinc supplements to help reverse numerous eye disorders including macular degeneration. When supplementing with zinc, one should also use small amounts of copper (roughly in a ratio of 15:1 zinc:copper). Also, zinc is best absorbed when taking similar amounts of vitamin B6. Zinc, copper and manganese are essential in the manufacture of an enzyme called superoxide dismutase, an antioxidant enzyme that removes dangerous superoxide free radicals in retinal cells.

**Ginkgo biloba extract** – Ginkgo has been used primarily in the treatment of cerebral vascular insufficiency, poor memory, depression, impotence and low energy. Ginkgo improves retinal circulation and has a protective affect against free radicals and thus helps prevent visual loss.

**Bilberry (Vaccinium myrtillus)** – Used in Europe for cataracts, macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa and diabetic retinopathy. Bilberry also prevents further damage from glaucoma by working as an antioxidant in the eyes. Its anthocyanidins increase intracellular vitamin C levels (a critical nutrient for healthy eyes) and decrease capillary fragility.

**Quercetin** – Quercetin is a bioflavonoid found in onions that prevents damage to fat tissue in the eyes by UV light. It also inhibits histamine release and relaxes smooth muscles in blood vessels. Swelling in the eyelids caused by allergies can be reduced by high dose quercetin supplementation.

**Rutin** – This is another bioflavonoid with benefits for optimal vision because it strengthens and improves the integrity of collagen, a substance important in preventing glaucoma. Eye pressures have been found to be optimized by rutin supplementation.

**Eyebright** – Eyebright is a traditional herbal remedy used for centuries for successful treatment of inflammation (conjunctivitis), bloodshot eyes and numerous other eye infirmities. Its ingredients are considered anti-inflammatory and its use is without side effects.

**Taurine** – Taurine is the most abundant amino acid in the eye. It modulates photoreceptor activity and is crucial for normal vision.

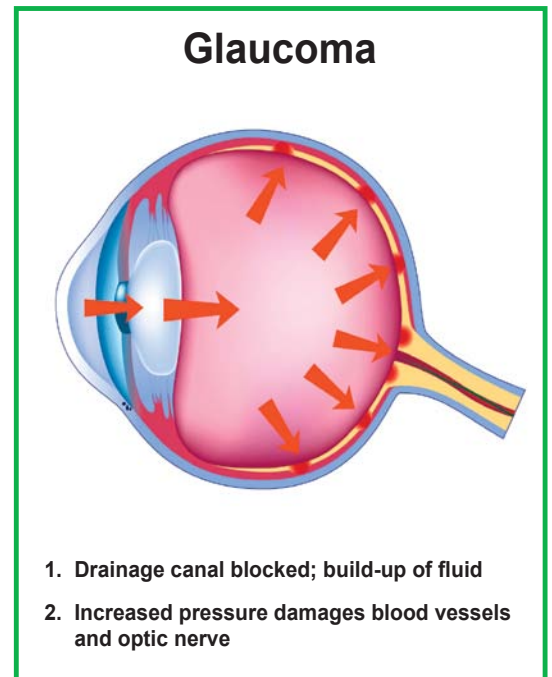
There are many combination vision support products containing all of these nutrients in one pill available at most health food stores. None of these natural supplements have any serious side effects but if you have any other health concerns, check with your natural health care provider .

## Glaucoma

Glaucoma is an eye disease caused by gradually increasing intraocular pressure. There is a slow loss of peripheral vision and gradual loss of central vision with complete blindness resulting if left untreated. The cause of glaucoma is unknown but it is thought that heredity, stress and nutritional problems all play a role. What occurs physiologically is an imbalance between the production and drainage of the aqueous humor. This is usually caused by obstruction of outflow. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness affecting approximately 7 million people in North America. It is usually seen in people over age forty and is more common in women than in men.

Symptoms of glaucoma are eye pain or discomfort, blurred vision, a frequent need to change prescriptions for glasses or contact lenses, impaired dark adaptation and seeing halos around lights. In some cases there are no symptoms and the diagnosis is made by an eye specialist. On ophthalmoscopic examination, there may be cupping of the optic disc and eye pressures may be greater than 22 on three successive readings. Conventional treatment includes eye drops oral medications and/or surgery (laser or otherwise) to keep the aqueous fluid draining.

Aerobic exercise (walking about 30 - 60 minutes daily is a good place to start) has been shown to reduce mean intraocular pressure by 4.6 mm Hg when compared to previously sedentary glaucoma patients. Aerobic exercise produces the same pressure lowering effects as prescription eye drops. This could just be brisk walking for an hour every day. Avoid tobacco smoke. Studies show that



there is a 2.9 increase in risk in developing glaucoma in smokers. Smoking a cigarette can raise the intraocular pressure by 5.0 mm Hg or more. Nicotine has been shown to reduce retinal blood flow by 16%.

UVA and blue violet sun rays increase the risk of developing free radicals which increase the risk for developing glaucoma but a good pair of sunglasses can block 100% of UVA and UVB and at least 85% of blue violet sun rays.

As far as diet is concerned, the isolation and elimination of food allergies would be helpful in the prevention of excessive fluid retention in the body. Studies have shown that coffee can produce a 13% reduction in retinal blood flow. Avoid caffeine from any source including chocolate, soft drinks and coffee, alcohol, salt and other stimulants. Prolonged reading, television watching, tobacco smoke exposure and other eye stressors should be avoided.

Foods which are high in vitamin C, rutin and other bioflavonoids, vitamin A, choline and B vitamins can help. These include chrysanthemum tea, mint, oyster shell powder, mulberries, black sesame seeds, lycium fruit, grapefruit, lemons, oranges, carrots, beets, beet tops, spinach, parsley, endive and celery. These foods can also be juiced and consumed several times each day. Most of the same nutritional supplements recommended earlier are also applicable to prevention and treatment of glaucoma. Discuss a personalized nutritional program with your natural health care provider. This is something that can be determined through a combination of history taking, physical examination and laboratory tests.

### Choosing The Right Supplement

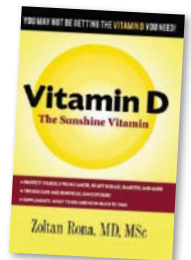
The medical/pharmaceutical industry, after years of criticizing natural remedies, has recently jumped on the antioxidant bandwagon by aggressively marketing synthetic combination products for supporting eye health, especially in the prevention and treatment of macular degeneration.

Virtually every ophthalmologist, (eye doctor), after years of criticizing people for taking vitamins, recommends these low potency brands containing isolated vitamins and minerals. Although these products sold in pharmacies are better than not supplementing with anything at all (although some of my more purist colleagues would argue that point), the general population is better served by using more complete and natural source supplements sold in health food stores.

Make that extra trip to your local health food store. The natural based eye support supplements sold there are more completely balanced biochemically, contain whole food extracts and do not have the synthetic fillers and additives found in the pharmaceutical grade products. Look for purity, potency and freshness in choosing any eye health supplement.

*Dr. Zoltan P. Rona practices Complementary Medicine in Toronto and is the medical editor of "The Encyclopedia of Natural Healing." He has also published several Canadian best-selling books, including "Return to The Joy of Health" and "Vitamin D - The Sunshine Vitamin." For more of his articles, see [www.mydoctor.ca/drzoltanrona](http://www.mydoctor.ca/drzoltanrona)*

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