



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Melisa Moore
503-219-9296

Open Your Eyes to Healthy Eating Habits

Millions of Americans Can Protect Against Eye Diseases by Eating Healthier

PORTLAND, ORE. [March 3, 2009] -- In honor of March's Save Your Vision Month, the Oregon Optometric Physician's Association reminds people that what you eat can affect your eye sight.

Research shows that one out of four Americans age 40 and older suffer from some level of vision loss. Multiple studies show there is a strong correlation between good nutrition and the prevention of these age-related eye diseases.

So what should you eat to improve your eye sight? If you answered carrots, you'd be in good company, but you'd be wrong. Nearly half of all Americans still believe carrots are the best food for eye health.* While carrots do contain nutritional value by supplying A beta-carotene essential for night vision, spinach and other dark, leafy greens are the healthiest foods for eyes because they naturally contain large amounts of lutein and zeaxanthin.

In fact, there are six nutrients that can help protect your eye health: antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin, essential fatty acids, vitamins C and E and the mineral zinc.

"Although eye-healthy foods can't reverse the damage of eye diseases, research shows they may help prevent or slow the progression of the diseases." said Dr. Todd Briscoe, Portland-area optometric physician. "Many people don't realize that eating healthy can have such positive effects on their eye sight."

Another interesting fact is that one glass of orange juice per day contains more than enough Vitamin C to help offset some eye diseases like cataracts and macular degeneration.

The Oregon Optometric Physician's Association recommends eating a variety of foods loaded with key nutrients for overall eye health, such as:

- **Lutein and zeaxanthin:** Colorful fruits and vegetables such as broccoli, spinach, kale, corn, green beans, peas, oranges and tangerines
- **Essential fatty acids:** Fatty fish like tuna, salmon, or herring, whole grain foods, chicken and eggs
- **Vitamin C:** Fruits and vegetables, including oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, papaya, green peppers and tomatoes
- **Vitamin E:** Vegetable oils, such as safflower or corn oil, almonds, pecans, sweet potatoes, and sunflower seeds
- **Zinc:** Extra-lean red meat, poultry, liver, shellfish, milk, baked beans, and whole grains

There are many recipes that promote healthy eye sight and vision, including this quick and easy one:

Whole-Wheat Penne with Spinach and Gorgonzola**

Ingredients:

10 oz. uncooked whole-wheat penne pasta

Olive oil cooking spray

1 1/2 cup yellow onion, diced (~1 medium onion)



3 large garlic cloves, minced
1/2 cup chicken broth
3 Roma tomatoes, chopped (~2 cups)
1 (6-ounce) bag fresh baby spinach
1/3 cup fresh basil, chopped or 1 teaspoon dried basil
salt and pepper to taste
2/3 cup crumbled gorgonzola cheese [or substitute ½ cup low-fat freshly-grated parmesan cheese]
1/3 cup pine nuts (optional)

Directions:

- Cook pasta according to package directions, without salting water.
- While pasta is cooking, spray a large, non-stick frying pan with cooking spray. Heat over medium-high heat. Add onions, then stir and cook until slightly transparent, approximately 5 minutes. Add garlic, stir and cook for another minute. Add broth and let simmer for 3 minutes. Add tomatoes, toss, and simmer for 2 minutes. Add spinach and basil, cook and stir for approximately 2 minutes, or until leaves wilt. Remove from heat and salt/pepper to taste.
- Drain pasta and add to spinach mixture. Thoroughly toss. Serve on a platter and top with gorgonzola (or parmesan) cheese and pine nuts. Makes 6 servings.

Additional eye-healthy recipes can be found online by visiting the OOPA's parent organization, the American Optometry Association at www.aoa.org. For more information on eye health in general visit www.oregonoptometry.org.

###

**American Eye-Q® survey - The third annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). It assesses public knowledge and understanding of a wide range of issues related to eye and visual health. From May 17-19, 2008, using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,001 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population. (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level.)*

***Recipe courtesy of Elizabeth Somer, registered dietician and nutrition research expert. Nutritional Information (per serving): 300 Calories; 25% fat (8.3 g total, 2.8 g saturated), 57% carbohydrate (43 g), 18% protein (13.5 g), 8 mg cholesterol, 8.6 g fiber, 27 mg vitamin C, 1.33 mg vitamin E, 20.4 mg lutein/zeaxanthin, 271 mg sodium.*

About the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association

The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association is a statewide organization comprised of Doctors of Optometry, college of optometry faculty, optometric students and industry-related associates. It advocates advancing the quality, availability and accessibility of eye, vision and related health care. It also works to represent the profession of optometry, to enhance and promote the independent and ethical decision making of its members, and to assist optometric physicians in practicing the highest standards of patient care. Based in Milwaukie, Oregon, the OOPA has nearly 400 members. For more information, visit www.oregonoptometry.org.

About the American Optometric Association

The American Optometric Association represents approximately 36,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. Optometrists serve patients in nearly 6,500 communities across the country, and in 3,500 of those communities are the only eye doctors. Doctors of optometry provide more than two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States. For more information, visit www.aoa.org.