

## January is Glaucoma Awareness Month FOCUS on EYE Health

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Vitamin Supplements: Do they really help?

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Fresh & Healthy Recipe

If you're like many Americans, your list of New Year's resolutions includes some form of health improvement. Whether it's promising to eat better and exercise, or reduce stress and spend more time with family, a commitment to wellness is a positive step towards a healthy and prosperous 2012.

This year, don't forget to put "keep up with wellness/preventive care" on your action items list. Don't underestimate the importance of these doctor visits, particularly vision exams with your optometrist – even if you think you have perfect vision!

The fact is, eye exams evaluate more than your vision, they can detect certain chronic and sometimes life-threatening diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and glaucoma. This month is glaucoma awareness month – and a great time to learn more about preventing this sight-stealing disease.

### What is Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a complex group of diseases that cause damage to the optic nerve, which is the part of the eye that carries the images we see to our brain. There are two main types of glaucoma: primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG), and angle-closure glaucoma. Most types of glaucoma clog the eye's drainage system. When fluid builds up, pressure (called intraocular pressure, or IOP) builds inside the eye, causing damage and vision loss.

Often referred to as a "sneak thief of sight," glaucoma is the world's leading cause of preventable blindness. Glaucoma has no symptoms, no pain and there is no cure at this time. It's estimated that over 4 million Americans have glaucoma, but only half of them even know they have it. The good news is that with regular checkups, glaucoma can be detected early when there still time to

slow disease progression and preserve your sight.

### Am I At Risk for Glaucoma?

Anyone can have glaucoma, even young children and infants. However, there higher risk groups, including:

- African Americans
- Hispanics in older age groups
- People over age 60
- People with a family history of glaucoma
- Steroid users
- People with a previous eye injury



### How is Glaucoma Diagnosed?

Glaucoma begins with a loss of peripheral or side vision, causing objects to appear less clear. By the time you notice the change, you could already have significant vision loss without realizing it!

A complete glaucoma evaluation includes five tests that measure:

- your inner eye pressure, or IOP
- the shape and color of your optic nerve
- your complete field of vision
- the angle where your iris meets the cornea
- the thickness of your cornea

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With early diagnosis, there are treatment options to help save your sight, such as medicines (pills and/or eye drops) and surgery.

This year, make your eye health a priority. Set an appointment with your eye doctor today...and maybe get some exercise and a healthy lunch on the way!

[www.glaucoma.org](http://www.glaucoma.org);

[www.nei.nih.gov/health/glaucoma](http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/glaucoma)

## Keep Your Sight

To preserve your eye health you must have your eyes examined regularly. The Glaucoma Research Foundation recommends the following schedule for comprehensive eye exams:

- Before age 40, every 2 to 4 years
- From age 40 to age 54, every 1 to 3 years
- From age 55 to 64, every 1 to 2 years
- After age 65, every 6 to 12 months

If you're at risk for glaucoma you should get a complete eye exam every one to two years.



## Vitamin Supplements: Do they really help?

Have you noticed that vitamin supplements seem to have fallen out of favor in the medical community? It's really no wonder since there has never really been a great wealth of medical research supporting the benefits of taking them. Doctors often recommend them because the general assumption is that supplements can't hurt, but do they really help?

### The New Skinny on Vitamins

New research shows that many vitamin supplements are not as effective in preventing disease as once thought. For example, there is no indication that vitamins E – thought to prevent prostate cancer, and C – often prescribed to prevent cancer and the common cold, really stand up to these claims.

Researchers don't know why vitamin supplements don't always do what they're supposed to do. The current theory is that when a vitamin is made into supplement form, it's isolated from other compounds it works with to prevent disease and promote health.

**The bottom line?** When taken without their compound "partners," vitamin supplements lose their effectiveness.

Naturally, there are exceptions. While the best source of vitamins come from eating good foods, vitamin supplements can be helpful in preventing or mitigating certain deficiencies. Here are just a few examples:

- **Folic acid supplements** have long been proven effective in preventing neural tube defects in babies and are recommended for women who are or may become pregnant.
- **Vitamin D supplements** make up for the loss of natural vitamin D absorption from food and sunlight that occurs as we age, particularly for people over the age of 50.
- **Vitamin B12** is found exclusively in animal products, so strict vegans should supplement their diet with B12 or increase their intake of B12 fortified foods to prevent deficiencies.

### What This Means to You

The lack of evidence that certain vitamin supplements help cure or prevent disease means you can keep more of your money in your pocket. If you suspect that you may not be getting enough of certain vitamins in the foods you eat, your doctor can run a test to determine if a deficiency exists and prescribe accordingly.



[www.medpagetoday.com](http://www.medpagetoday.com)

## Ask the Coach

**Q** I had physical therapy on my knee last year. When can I begin some kind of exercise program?



**A** There is no better time than now to start an exercise program. Physical therapy (PT) is intended to help you return to your normal routine, which for most people means going back to being sedentary. Not a good idea! If you commit to a regular exercise program, you will not only increase the strength and flexibility of your knee, but you'll improve your heart and lung health, too.

A good starting point is the home exercise instructions provided when you were released from PT. Here you should find specific information about exercises to avoid and how to manage your symptoms. The idea is to start slow and steadily increase intensity over time to avoid setbacks. You might want to keep an exercise log to help you stay motivated and track your progress.

Over time, when you feel stronger, consider scheduling a few sessions with a certified personal trainer to develop an appropriate and effective program that will help you to avoid future injury.

Good luck!

[www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org)



## Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

### Lucky Black-eyed Pea Salad

*This New Year's, start the day with a delicious, healthy alternative to the traditional black-eyed pea dishes. Try this salad loaded with flavor and goodness (and lots of luck, too!).*

#### Ingredients:

- 1 lb dried black-eyed peas
- 1 cup fat-free Italian salad dressing
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 2 cups green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup sweet red pepper, chopped
- ¾ cup green onions, finely chopped
- ½ cup seeded jalapeno peppers, finely chopped
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, minced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ tsp salt
- ⅛ tsp hot pepper sauce

#### Directions:

Place peas in soup kettle; add enough water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil and boil for 2 minutes. Remove from heat; cover and let stand for 1 hour. Drain and rinse peas, discarding liquid. Return peas to pan; cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1 hour or until tender.

Drain peas and place in a large bowl. Add salad dressing and onion; toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate until cool. Add the remaining ingredients; toss gently. Yield: 12 servings.

#### Nutritional analysis:

One serving (¾ cup) equals 141 calories, 1g fat, 1mg cholesterol, 392mg sodium, 26g carbohydrate, 7g fiber, 8g protein.



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