

# HEALTHY LIVING

Wellness Newsletter from **AAOA**

## MARCH 2015

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# A Closer Look: Who's At Risk for Cataracts?

See how to protect yourself from a common cause of vision loss.

Chances are you know at least two facts about cataracts. One: You're more likely to get them later in life. Two: You're better off without them.

## A BLURRY VIEW

In a normal eye, light travels through a clear lens, which is made mostly of water and protein. A cataract occurs when protein clumps together and clouds the lens.

If you have one, it can be a bit like trying to look through a foggy windshield. As a cataract grows, it may make it harder to read, drive or even see a smile on a friend's face. And, if left untreated, it can cause blindness.

Most cataracts are age-related. Some people develop the condition early — in their 40s or 50s. But, these cataracts are usually so small that they don't affect vision. It's usually after age 60 that this

condition begins to steal sight.

In fact, by age 80, more than half of all Americans either have a cataract or have had surgery for one.

## HOW HEALTHY LIVING HELPS

This chart shows some other common risk factors and steps that can help reduce your chances of developing cataracts.

Research shows that nutrition plays a role in eye health, too. When you eat a healthy, varied and colorful diet — rich in fruits and veggies — you get antioxidants that may help preserve your sight.

## SEE WELL INTO YOUR FUTURE

Talk with your doctor about how often you need eye exams. An eye care professional can screen you for cataracts, glaucoma and other conditions.

### What raises cataract risk

### What you can do

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Tobacco use</b>                     | If you use tobacco, talk with your doctor about effective ways to quit.  |
| <b>Sunlight exposure</b>               | Year-round, wear UV-blocking contacts or wraparound sunglasses that block 99-100% of UVA and UVB rays. For extra protection, wear a wide-brimmed hat that shields your eyes.   |
| <b>High blood pressure or diabetes</b> | Talk with your doctor about how to reduce your risk of these conditions. And, if you already have diabetes or high blood pressure, follow your treatment plan.   |
| <b>Eye injuries</b>                    | Wear safety glasses with side shields anytime your eyes might be exposed to hazards in the air - for example, when woodworking or mowing the lawn. Wear protective eyewear for any sport involving a ball, racket or flying object, as well. |
| <b>Excessive alcohol use</b>           | If you choose to drink, do so only in moderation. That means no more than one drink a day for a woman and no more than two for a man.*   |

\*Some people should drink less than these amounts or not use alcohol at all. Talk with your doctor if you have questions about alcohol use or have difficulty drinking in moderation.



## Why Mercury Matters

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Most fish contain traces of mercury — more specifically, methylmercury. It's a pollutant that fish are exposed to in the environment. For most people, eating fish with small amounts of mercury is not dangerous. But, in large amounts, it can be toxic to human nerve cells. It may be especially harmful to children. So, experts urge caution for

young children — as well as women who are pregnant, could become pregnant or are nursing. If you're in one of these groups, you don't need to abandon seafood altogether. In fact, if you're pregnant, the omega-3s from low-mercury seafood may help your baby's brain and eye development. Talk with your doctor about safe choices for you. In

general, it's best to choose a variety of different fish types. However, limit "white" (albacore) tuna to one serving a week. And, avoid four fish that are known to be high in mercury: shark, swordfish, tilefish and king mackerel.\*

\*Contact your local environmental protection office about the safety of fish caught in local streams and lakes.

# Save it for Summer!

## Grilled Cod



Season it, wrap it and grill! Pair it with a salad and small baked sweet potato for a light meal or add sliced vegetables into the foil for extra flavor.

### Ingredients:

12 ounces cod  
2 Tablespoons butter or trans-fat-free margarine  
1/4 cup lemon juice  
1 Tablespoon dried parsley  
1 teaspoon dill weed  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1 onion, thinly sliced

### Preparation:

Preheat barbecue grill. Spray two large squares of aluminum foil with cooking spray and evenly divide cod into two portions. In a small saucepan, melt butter and add lemon juice, parsley, dill weed, salt and pepper. Pour equal amounts over the fish. Sprinkle fish with paprika and top with sliced onion. Wrap the foil securely around the fish, leaving a small space for the fish to expand. Grill for 5 to 7 minutes per side.

### Nutrition Facts

Yields 8 Servings

Amount Per Serving

|               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Calories 290g | Fiber 3g          |
| Fat 8g        | Protein 34g       |
| Sodium 280mg  | Carbohydrates 22g |

# Consumer-Smart Tips

For the best catch, be choosy.

Look for:

- Fish that smells fresh, not fishy or sour.
- Fillets that are not discolored. There shouldn't be any darkening or drying around the edges.
- Flesh that springs back when pressed.



## Stress Solutions: 3 Paths to a Healthier Heart

*Try these hints to fight stress before it strikes, in the moment and after the fact.*

When stress goes unchecked, it can take a toll on your heart health. That may include raising your risk of high blood pressure, a heart attack or other problems.

### What's the link?

Under stress, our bodies release the hormones adrenaline and cortisol. They help trigger what's known as the "fight or flight" response. It's nature's way of preparing us to respond to a crisis or threat. We breathe more rapidly — and our heart rate and blood pressure rise. These effects are usually temporary.

Some people might cope with stress in unhealthy ways. They might overeat, smoke or drink too much, for example.

### Take heart: A 3-track approach

Some stress is unavoidable. But, there are healthy ways to manage it. Here are some techniques to try.

#### 1. Before — be proactive:

- From to-do lists and cellphone apps, both low- and high-tech tools can help you organize your daily tasks.

- De-clutter your day. Are you trying to tackle too much? Write down your current commitments. See if you can cross out any that aren't musts — or bump less urgent tasks to another day.

- Put fuel in the tank. Do you see a stressful tomorrow ahead? Pack a nutritious lunch — and hit the pillow early. Proper rest and nutrition help keep you focused and energized.



#### 2. During — soothe stress when it strikes:

- Take a breather. Closing your eyes and taking slow, deep breaths helps you relax. And, it may even slow your heart rate.

- Take a quick stroll. Being active is a win-win. It can ease tension in the moment and it's good for your heart. Even a 10 minute outing can help.\*

- Put anger on pause. When something upsets you, count to 10 — or higher, if needed — before responding. Walk away if you can. Then, reconsider your reaction.

#### 3. After — regroup and unwind:

- Find your calm. Kick back for a few minutes after a stressful day. Maybe that's with a serene playlist, a tea party with your toddler, or just a quiet moment to meditate or collect your thoughts.

- Connect. Talking with a supportive loved one or friend can help you feel better. And, it may help you see challenges in new ways.

- Pursue your passions. What makes you happy? Gardening? Playing the guitar? Spend a little time every day doing something you enjoy.

- Get it off your mind. Jotting down your feelings in a journal can help you let go. It's also a good way to pinpoint stressors — and brainstorm solutions.

\*For safety's sake, talk with your doctor before significantly increasing your activity level.



# A Site for Sore Eyes:

## Prevent Eyestrain at the Computer

Do you spend most of your work day with eyes locked on a computer screen? It's a way of life for many, who then go home to more e-mails on their personal computers.

Staring at a monitor for hours at a time can cause red, itchy, sore or dry eyes. You may have trouble focusing. Others may get headaches or eye fatigue.

Often, the problems stem from poor lighting or glare. The lighting in most offices is too bright for optimal viewing of computer screens. Bright lights shining on the display screen make it harder to read. Or sometimes, the person's regular reading glasses don't work as well for the longer distance to the

monitor screen. Making changes to your equipment, your work space setup and lighting can all make a difference.

### Reduce Glare and Reflection

- Place your monitor at a right angle from the window or main light source.
- Use blinds or drapes on windows to shield bright light from your direct view.
- Position a desk lamp so the light does not reflect on the screen.
- Tilt down the monitor slightly to prevent it from reflecting overhead light.

### Diffuse Lighting

- Turn off overhead lights when you can. Using a desk light is better for reading.
- Dim the lights by replacing two bulbs in a four-bulb

fixture with dimmer bulbs, or replace the bulbs in every other fixture.

- Avoid intense or uneven lighting in your field of vision, especially brightness, around your monitor.
- Adjust computer settings to avoid high contrast between light and dark areas of your screen.

Lastly, give your eyes a rest every hour while you're working. Catch up on another task that doesn't involve looking at the monitor.



## MARCH WELLNESS TIP



**Sheridah Bennett**  
(AAOA Wellness Champion)

## Wellness Tip

### Take Care of Your Contacts

If you wear contact lenses, be sure to keep them clean. Wash your hands before inserting or removing them. Don't exceed recommended time limits for wearing your lenses. If you feel pain, remove them. Remember, if you have sudden pain, sensitivity, discomfort, redness or blurred vision, see your doctor or eye care specialist right away.

## Go Local: Dig in a Community Garden Near You

No room for a garden? Or, maybe you wouldn't know what to do with weeds or seeds. Don't throw in the shovel just yet. You can still be part of the grow-it-yourself movement.



They're perfect for people who don't have a place to plant or don't want to take on tending a garden alone. And, organizers are usually thrilled to have extra hands to help.

### **A Bounty of Benefits**

Taking part in a community garden has many rewards, including:

#### **A wholesome harvest.**

Fruits and vegetables of all types are key to a healthy diet. They are full of valuable nutrients, including vitamins, antioxidants and fiber.

#### **A fresh-air workout.**

Digging, pulling, hoeing, hauling, harvesting ... Gardening can build muscles, strength and

flexibility. And, it may burn lots of calories too.

Of course, don't overdo it — and remember proper form when lifting, bending, etc.

### **Get Growing!**

To find a community garden near you, contact local garden stores or your state's Cooperative Extension office. You can also visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's People's Garden. It has a database of local gardens, as well as helpful gardening how-to videos and fact sheets.

### **AAOA HEALTHCARE**

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[www.aaoamerica.org](http://www.aaoamerica.org)  
[www.aaoahealthcare.org](http://www.aaoahealthcare.org)

(425) 968.0545  
(866) 968.0545 (Toll Free)  
10510 NE Northup Way, Suite 200  
Kirkland, WA 98033