

# A Healthy Focus on Vision

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parents both have had cataracts and surgery to correct this. How can I avoid getting this condition too? –P.G., Athens, Ga.

A. Cataracts actually are a buildup of damaged proteins, caused primarily by free-radical reactions occurring in the lens of the eye. Even though cataracts can be removed surgically, it would be much better to prevent them from forming in the first place.

A study published in the Archives of Ophthalmology last year examined data from more than 3,000 patients between the ages of 43 and 86. The study found that patients who had for more than 10 years taken either a multivitamin or nutritional supplement that contained vitamin E and vitamin C had approximately a 60 percent decreased risk of developing cataracts. However, taking the multivitamins or supplements for less than 10 years did not necessarily lower the risk for developing cataracts.

In addition to taking a comprehensive multivitamin and mineral supplement, I recommend you take other nutritional substances as well. Here are a few that I suggest.

Take at least 400 IUs to 800 IUs (International Units) of vitamin E daily, and that should be in its natural form. I also recommend taking vitamin C, 500 mg (milligrams) three times a day.

Lutein, a carotene, also is very beneficial in preventing

cataracts. It is found in green vegetables such as Romaine lettuce, spinach, kale and collard greens. Approximately 5 mg to 20 mg of lutein a day should be sufficient to help prevent cataract formation.

The herb bilberry, which is related to blueberry, may be beneficial in preventing cataracts. I place patients on 120 mg to 240 mg of bilberry twice a day.

Grape seed extract and pine bark extract, otherwise known as OPCs, also are very strong antioxidants, and I routinely place patients on 50 mg to 100 mg twice a day. Patients on blood thinners should consult their doctors before using higher doses of these.

Lipoic acid is a superstar antioxidant because it works in both the water-soluble and fat-soluble tissues of the body. It also helps to recycle the other antioxidants. I routinely place patients on 100 mg of lipoic acid twice a day.

Ginkgo biloba helps improve circulation, even the microcirculation in the eye, and I regularly place patients with cataracts on 80 mg to 120 mg of Ginkgo three times a day. Remember, take the multivitamin and mineral supplement in addition to the other supplements.

Q. I have an enlarged prostate and have been on medication for this. However, the side effects of the medication are severe. Are there natural means for relieving my condition?

—S.B., Tempe, Ariz.

, as a man grows older the prostate gland grows larger—and as a result, usually by age 80 more than 90 percent of men have symptoms of an enlarged prostate.

This condition is known in the medical field as BPH (benign prostatic hypertrophy).

The most common symptoms of this condition are frequent urination, decreased force of the stream of urine, having to wake up at night in order to urinate, and problems starting and stopping the stream of urine.

Commonly I place patients with BPH on the herb saw palmetto—normally 300 mg of saw palmetto twice each day.

Pygeum is another herb that may be effective in relieving the symptoms of an enlarged prostate. I normally place patients on 100 mg of this twice a day.

Another supplement that is widely used in Europe for controlling symptoms of an enlarged prostate is beta-sitosterol. Approximately 100 mg daily of beta-sitosterol is needed. Finally, the herb nettle root may be effective in offering you some relief.

You should be able to find a combination of all of these different herbs at health-food stores. If taken consistently, these supplements will help to relieve the symptoms of your condition.

A recent study in a respected medical journal revealed that nutritional supplements can reduce cataract disease.