

# HERKIMER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING

## NUTRITION NEWS

WRITTEN BY: SHANNON DAVIS, RD, CDN

LAYOUT BY: REGINA PIZZO

### Healthy Vision

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Taking care of your vision as you age is an important consideration. We've probably all heard that carrots are good for eyesight. But incorporating other nutritious foods into your diet may play a key role as well. There are even vitamins on the shelf of your local supermarket that tout claims that choosing them will keep your eyes healthy.

Lutein is a nutrient that is often heard in conjunction with eye health. But few people are actually familiar with what lutein is. Lutein is a yellowish-orange pigment that is found mostly in plant. It is a type of carotenoid. You may have heard this term in relation to beta carotene, which is another carotenoid. Lutein is found in the retina of the eye, so it is essential to eye health and maintaining good vision. Lutein also has the ability to work as an antioxidant.

Many vitamins are now supplemented with lutein in the hopes of preserving good eye function. But eating a diet rich in lots of colorful fruits and vegetables will also help ensure that you are getting adequate amounts of lutein, as well as other carotenoids.

Lutein is found mainly from plant sources, including kale, spinach, corn, squash, oranges, bananas, and broccoli. The only animal source of lutein is found in egg yolks. While some people may try to limit their intake of eggs related to possible cardiovascular issues, consuming two to three eggs per week is generally considered safe for the vast majority of the population. On the last page of this newsletter, you will find a recipe that incorporates some of these foods, including eggs, which makes it high in lutein.

We have discussed the importance of including antioxidants in your diet before. Antioxidants are useful in the prevention of many diseases, including heart disease as well as certain types of cancer. Also, most foods that are high in antioxidants are also high in fiber, low in saturated fats and cholesterol, and a good source of other vitamins and minerals. Now we're learning that antioxidants may play a role in maintaining your vision as well.

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### Monthly Exercise:

#### **Wall Push Ups**

Place your hands flat against a blank wall.

While keeping your hands flat and your elbows bent at a ninety-degree angle lower yourself towards the wall until your nose is almost touching it.

Then slowly push yourself back until you are standing up straight.

With summer in full swing, now is a great time to start increasing your intake of high antioxidant foods. Brightly colored fruits and vegetables are loaded with antioxidants. “Superfoods”, such as blueberries, acai berries, and goji berries are widespread this season. Pomegranates and cranberries are also rich in antioxidants. Here is a partial list of some of the most antioxidant rich foods:

- ♦ Beans
- ♦ Blueberries
- ♦ Broccoli
- ♦ Oats
- ♦ Oranges
- ♦ Pumpkin
- ♦ Salmon
- ♦ Spinach
- ♦ Soy
- ♦ Tea (green or black)
- ♦ Tomatoes
- ♦ Walnuts
- ♦ Yogurt

Sometimes, the total antioxidant amount in a food is less important than how our bodies metabolize the antioxidants. The bioavailability of the nutrients plays a key role in the health benefits of the foods as well. Some other rich sources of antioxidants include cranberries, artichokes, prunes, apples, pecans, and potatoes.

By adding some of these foods to your already established eating plan, you may be able to reap the health benefits without a total upheaval of your diet. For example, adding fresh or frozen berries to your cereal (hot

or cold) in the morning is an easy way to increase your intake of antioxidants. Having a cup of tea in the afternoon can also increase your intake of antioxidants. And switching out a meal that was centered around red meat could be changed to one that incorporates salmon. This is also a way to increase your intake of mega 3 fatty acids as well.

Keep in mind that whenever possible, it is best to obtain your nutrients from whole foods, as opposed to juices or supplements. Whether fresh or frozen, using whole fruits, for example, will provide greater benefits than drinking a glass of 100% juice or adding an additional vitamin or mineral supplement.



Diabetes continues to be on the rise, especially type II or adult onset diabetes. This is probably due to a combination of factors, including the increasing prevalence of obesity and a greater longevity of the population. One complication that arises from unmanaged diabetes is retinopathy. It is caused by damage to the blood vessels of the light sensitive tissue at the back of the eye (the retina).

Diabetic retinopathy may initially cause few or no symptoms. As it progresses, however, it can eventually lead to blindness. The longer you have diabetes and the less controlled your blood sugar is, the more likely you are to develop diabetic retinopathy.

What causes retinopathy? Over time, too much sugar in your system can lead to the blockage of the tiny blood vessels that supply the retina, cutting off the retina's blood supply. This results in the eye attempting to grow new blood vessels. But the new blood vessels usually don't develop properly and can leak.

There are two types of retinopathy: early diabetic retinopathy (NPDR-non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy) and advanced diabetic retinopathy.

NPDR is much more common and is so named because the new blood vessels are not growing. The walls of the blood vessels in your retina weaken and sometimes the smaller vessels can leak fluid and blood into the retina. NPDR can progress from mild to severe as more blood vessels become blocked.

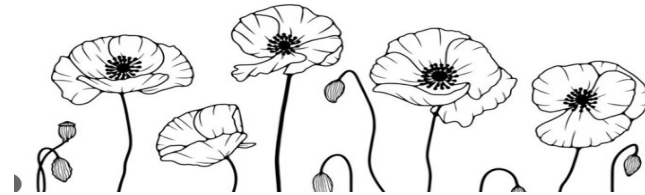
In proliferative diabetic retinopathy, damaged blood vessels close off, causing the growth of new abnormal blood vessels in the retina. Eventually scar tissue may cause the retina to detach from the back of the eye. This can also cause pressure to build up in the eye (a type of glaucoma).

There are certain individuals who are at an increased risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. Risk factors include the following: duration of diabetes (the longer you have diabetes, the greater your risk of developing retinopathy), poor control of your blood sugar level, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, pregnancy, tobacco use, and being black, Hispanic, or Native American.

Diabetic retinopathy usually affects both eyes and includes the following symptoms:

- ♦ Spots or dark strings floating in your vision
  - ♦ Blurred vision
  - ♦ Fluctuating vision
  - ♦ Impaired color vision
- ♦ Dark or empty areas in your vision
  - ♦ Vision loss

Consult your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms as early detection and intervention are crucial for a good outcome.



## **Come Learn about Scams, Elder Abuse & Financial Exploitation**

Presented by: Herkimer County OFA for the Aging NY Connects & Sheriffs Dept

Wednesday, August 13, 2025

**12pm—2pm**

Schuyler town Office

2090 State Route 5, Utica, NY 13502

**LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED**

Please call or email to RSVP

Office for the Aging— 315-867-1371

kheansel@herkimercounty.org

## **HEAP—(315) 867-1195**

The HEAP program has closed, however if you have a termination letter from National Grid or your local provider help is available. Please call:

Mohawk Valley Community Action

**(315) 624-9930**

Catholic Charities—**(315) 894-9917**



**109 Mary Street, Suite 1101**

**Herkimer, NY 13350**

**Phone: 315-867-1195**

**Fax: 315-867-1448**

**E-mail: [hcofa@herkimercountyny.gov](mailto:hcofa@herkimercountyny.gov)**

**Web: [www.herkimercountyny.gov](http://www.herkimercountyny.gov)**

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## **Spinach Quiche**

**1/2 cup butter**

**1 small onion, chopped**

**3 cloves garlic, chopped**

**1 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained**

**1 (4.5 ounce) can mushrooms, drained**

**1 (6 ounce) package herb and garlic feta, crumbled**

**1 (8 ounce) package shredded Cheddar cheese, divided**

**Salt and pepper to taste**

**1 deep dish (9 inch) pie crust**

**4 large eggs**

**1 cup milk**

Gather all ingredients. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Melt butter in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and saute until lightly browned, about 7 minutes.

Stir in spinach, mushrooms, feta, and 1/2 cup Cheddar. Season with salt and pepper.

Spoon mixture into prepared pie crust.

Whisk eggs and milk together in a medium bowl until combined. Season with salt and pepper.

Pour over the spinach mixture in pie crust, allowing egg mixture to thoroughly combine with spinach mixture.