

# The Mediterranean Diet Lowers Risk for Vision Loss

Courtesy of Personalized Retina Care of Naples

**M**acular degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss and blindness in aging adults. More than 10 million Americans have some form of Aging Macular Degeneration (AMD), and unfortunately, there is still no cure for the disease. The retina becomes damaged, and vision loss occurs as the cells of the macula begin to deteriorate. Although it is a very complex disease and still not completely understood, it can be brought on by both hereditary and environmental factors.

## Age-Related Macular Degeneration Risk Factors

- Age: 50's and older
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Family history of AMD
- Obesity
- Excessive sun exposure
- Caucasians with light eyes and fair skin
- Diet's high in saturated fats and high glycemic carbohydrates

The European Union brought together a large group of researchers to investigate the link between genetic dispositions and dietary habits in relation to AMD. One of the trials, the Rotterdam study followed its participants for 21 years with food analysis questionnaires taken every 5 years. The other trial known as the Alienor study followed its participants for 4 years and did food analysis every 2 years. They concluded that those who followed the Mediterranean diet were 41% less likely to develop AMD.

## Mediterranean Diet

Well known for its ability to help stave off chronic diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, cardiovascular disorders and Parkinson's, the Mediterranean diet is a healthful way of eating that embodies the foods of the countries that border the Mediterranean Sea.

The basics of the diet are consuming mostly fruits and vegetables, along with whole grains, legumes, nuts and olive oil. The majority of animal protein is from fish and seafood, while some poultry and eggs, cheese and yogurt are acceptable. Red wine is encouraged on this diet and can be consumed in moderation. Meat, sugar and unhealthy fats are rarely ever eaten.

The Mediterranean diet is not only abundant in leafy greens, vegetables, and fruits but also healthy fats or monosaturated fats from foods like avocados; cold



pressed olive oil, nuts, and fish. In the Mediterranean lifestyle, saturated fats are minimal. This way of eating helps to lower the bad cholesterol, LDL and is known to be heart healthy, but along with these findings, recently two studies were conducted to measure the effects of this diet and reducing Aging Macular Degeneration, which reported significant evidence of lower incidences of the disease.

## Additional Study—Coimbra Eye Study

Presented at the *American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) 2016* annual meeting, two Portuguese populations were studied and their individual data was analyzed to see the effects of the Mediterranean diet in association with AMD.

In the Coimbra Eye Study, 883 participants over the age of 55 were followed for two years, 448 of them developed early macular degeneration, and 434 did not. Based on their diet, participants that followed the Mediterranean way of eating had a 35% lower chance of developing AMD. And proven even more useful in the case for the Mediterranean diet, was the amount of fruit eaten by certain individuals showed significant reductions in developing AMD. In addition to these studies, it has been widely reported that antioxidants, zinc, and Vitamin C and E are helpful in deterring Age-Related Macular Degeneration.

According to the *Ophthalmology Times*, a second study was conducted in Portugal. In this study, 4,370 people from a coastal town that consumed the healthy Mediterranean way of eating was compared to 8,692 people from a central town that ate mostly saturated fats from animal protein; the coastal town participants had only 6.99% evidence of AMD compared to the central town participants that showed 15.39% AMD.

To incorporate the Mediterranean Diet into your lifestyle, eat a well-balanced diet full of fruit and plant-based foods, fresh wild caught fatty fish, beans, seeds, and nuts. Exercise is also paramount in preventing AMD. Your annual eye exams are critical for the early detection of the disease, and there are progressive treatment options to help maintain your retina and macula health.

If you or someone you love is developing eye irregularities, blurry vision, or vision loss, please make sure to schedule an appointment with an ophthalmologist immediately to help prevent any further damage to your eyesight.

Personalized Retina Care of Naples provides incomparable diagnosis, medical and surgical treatment for retinal conditions and disorders. Dr. Taba is a Board Certified Ophthalmologist and is Fellowship trained in surgical and medical retinal diseases.

To find out more, or to schedule your appointment, please call (239) 325-3970 today.



**Dr. Katia E. Taba** is a Board Certified Ophthalmologist who opened her practice, Personalized Retina Care of Naples, to provide individualized and patient-centered care in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Significantly, she will take the time

to explain all aspects of her plan of care to the patient and family.

She acquired extensive experience from her prior role as an instructor and assistant professor at a teaching hospital and many years of training in both medical and surgical vitreoretinal diseases. All diagnostic equipment is the state-of-the-art for accurate diagnosis allowing the best visual results.

Often times same day appointments are available at our conveniently located facility in the center of Naples at the Pine Ridge Road and Livingston Road intersection, off of I-75 exit 107.



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[www.retinanaples.com](http://www.retinanaples.com), or call our office at  
239-325-3970.

3467 Pine Ridge Road Suite 103  
Naples 34109