



What you eat can affect your eyesight

By Terry Owen



Medical News Today reports that major research conducted over two years has shown that a diet rich in red meat, fried foods, high fat dairy, processed meats, and refined grains is detrimental for the heart and is coupled with development of cancer.

However, not many people consider what diet can do to their eyesight.

A new study, published in the *British Journal of Ophthalmology*, has found a link between a diet rich in unhealthy foods and age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

AMD is a condition that impacts the retina with age, blurring central vision. Central vision helps people see objects clearly and perform everyday activities such as reading and driving.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in the United States, around 1.8- million people aged 40 and above are living with AMD, and another 7.3-million have a condition called drusen, which usually precedes AMD.

The CDC also says that "AMD is the leading cause of permanent impairment of reading and fine or close-up vision among people aged 65 years and older."

Senior study author Dr Amy Millen, from the University at Buffalo in New York, told *Medical News Today*: "Most people understand that diet influences cardiovascular disease risk and obesity risks; however, I'm not sure the public thinks about whether or not diet influences one's risk of vision loss later in life."

What causes red spots in the eye?

A red spot on the eye may look suspicious and could cause you to worry, but it is rarely a medical emergency. Usually, a red spot on the eye occurs when blood collects under the conjunctiva due to a subconjunctival haemorrhage. This was reported in *Medical News Today*.

The conjunctiva is the transparent membrane that covers the surface of the eye. The conjunctiva contains tiny blood vessels that can break or leak after sudden increases in pressure.

Causes of subconjunctival haemorrhage can include sneezing, coughing, and an injury to the eye.

A red spot on the eye, or subconjunctival haemorrhage, usually occurs as a result of increased blood pressure. In some cases, subconjunctival haemorrhages can appear without any identifiable cause.

You might not realize you have a subconjunctival haemorrhage until you look in a mirror.

Common causes of a red spot on the eye include:

Sneezing, coughing, vomiting, excess physical strain, injury to the eye, irritation or allergic reactions, rubbing the eye too hard, infections.

Rare causes can include high blood pressure, blood thinners, medical disorders that cause bleeding, diabetes and diabetic retinopathy – this is when blood vessels in the eye break due to high blood sugar levels.

Symptoms of diabetic retinopathy include “floaters”, blurred vision, reduced night vision, colours that appear faded, and it is recommended to talk to your doctor about controlling your diabetes.

Subconjunctival haemorrhages do not usually require treatment. The healing time can vary from a few days to a few weeks, depending on the size of the spot.

People can use artificial tears to relieve irritation or dryness. Artificial tears are available in pharmacies without a prescription.

A doctor may prescribe antibiotic eye drops if the red spot is the result of a bacterial infection.

People should not be alarmed if the red spot changes colours from red to yellow or orange. This is a sign that the haemorrhage is healing. Like a bruise, it may slowly fade over time.