Myths & FACTS About Cataracts

Cataracts are a leading cause of blindness in adults. They form when proteins build up in the lens of the eye, clouding the lens and blurring vision. Symptoms can include poor night vision, fading colors, difficulty reading, double vision, headaches or lamps seeming too bright, or frequent changes in vision correction prescriptions. There are many misconceptions about this disorder. Check out the facts:

**Myth:** Only elderly people get cataracts.
**FACT:** While most (but not all) cases are age-related, diabetes, eye trauma and exposure to certain types of radiation may also cause cataracts. They can even appear at birth.

**Myth:** Cataract surgery is dangerous and difficult.
**FACT:** The operation to remove cataracts is one of the safest and most effective surgeries. The procedure is painless, the recovery time is short and the cure is permanent.

**Myth:** I can’t reduce my risk of developing cataracts.
**FACT:** Lifestyle changes can make a huge difference, so avoid smoking and decrease your sun exposure. These two steps alone could cut your risk in half. Wear sunglasses and a hat to block harmful UV rays. Include leafy greens, fruits, vegetables and other high-antioxidant foods in your daily diet. Alcohol and steroids may also increase risk, so proceed with caution.

**Keep Your Eye on It:** If you have a family history of cataracts, be especially diligent about maintaining habits that could minimize your risk. Eye health and safety is in the spotlight in this edition of Well Connections. Check it out at [www.personalbest.com/extras/eyeaugust10](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/eyeaugust10).

Where Do Some Diets Go Wrong?

With so many best-selling diet books and weight loss products, you might expect Americans to be experts in weight reduction. However, most people who go on crash diets eventually regain the weight (and sometimes more). So where do things go wrong?

- Many people go on highly **restrictive diets** but resume their old patterns when they can no longer stand the deprivation.
- Fast food is often tasty, inexpensive and convenient, making it easy to give in to the temptation.
- "Emotional eating" to manage anxiety, depression and boredom is an often overlooked cause of weight gain.
- People lack the **support** needed to help them maintain their weight loss goals.

**What’s the formula for lasting weight loss success?** Turn the page to find out.

Quick Course in 10-Minute Workouts

If you think you don’t have time to exercise, breaking up your workout into 10-minute segments could be the ticket. **Why?** Several short workouts can be as effective as one longer session, easier to stick to and simpler to fit into your schedule. **Bonus:** Short segments of movement can be done nearly everywhere.

**These workouts are flexible.** You can do one activity for 10 minutes, or break it up into several one- to two-minute moderate-intensity segments. You should notice an increase in your pulse rate but still be able to talk comfortably. Try to include stretching, aerobic components and strength building. **For example:** You might combine yoga, jumping jacks and lifting small weights.

**These short stints can be incorporated into your regular activities.** Take the stairs at work, walk briskly for 10 minutes straight when shopping at the mall, or stretch during television commercials. Dancing, moderate housework and gardening also count. If you haven’t exercised in a while, start with one 10-minute period of movement and work up to three or more per day. If you have any medical concerns, consult your health care provider before starting a new exercise routine.

**Every minute counts:** Over time, these quick exercise breaks will add up to better overall physical fitness and health.

**DR. ZORBA’S LONGEVITY CORNER**

**Lose the Cigarettes, Lose the Weight.** Many people fear that quitting smoking will lead to weight gain. Research now shows that a combination of smoking cessation and weight loss programs may boost your chance of success. Overweight female smokers who wanted to quit were given stop-smoking counseling; some were also placed on medication, while some were given weight loss counseling. The winners were the ones who received smoking-cessation, weight loss counseling and meds to help them quit. Using all three may spell success for you too.
Sweet News. The FDA has approved two new natural sweeteners for use in foods. Both are purified forms of stevia, a substance derived from the leaves of a South American plant. It’s much sweeter than sugar, contains no fructose or sucrose and has almost zero calories. These sweeteners are appearing in an increasing number of products, from baked goods to sodas. If you’re watching your weight or don’t like the taste of artificial sweeteners, that’s really sweet news.

Food and Mood — Really?
Can food really affect your mood? One recent study suggested that carbohydrates — bread, cereal, pasta and the like — helped brighten the spirits of participants, which may explain why people sometimes crave sweets when they’re feeling down. When you eat matters too. Having a nutritious breakfast can help keep your energy level up throughout the day.

Other possible food-mood connections include:

- **Omega-3 fatty acids** (“fish oil”) may help stave off depression and dementia.
- **Low glycemic index foods**, which take longer for your body to break down, may help you maintain steady blood sugar and energy levels throughout the day. Whole grains and vegetables, for example, are generally better choices than white bread or white rice.
- **Olive oil** and other monounsaturated fats may partly explain why the Mediterranean diet is associated with fewer mental disorders.
- **Chocolate** seems to have a mood-elevating effect for some people, but it’s usually high in fat and sugar, so a little goes a long way.
- **Folic acid** (which is found in spinach, supplements and fortified foods) may reduce the risk of depression and memory problems.
- **Caffeine** in small doses may improve your alertness and mood, but too much can cause anxiety and mood swings.
- **Water** is often overlooked, but staying well hydrated will help you feel better — so drink to your health.

To feel “fit as a fiddle” you must tone down your middle. ~ Anonymous

The Secret to Weight Loss Success
People who successfully maintain weight loss make lifestyle changes. Their secret to success? Take a look:

- They exercise a lot, walking on average 8,000 more steps a day than the typical person. Diet and exercise are necessary for steady weight loss.
- They favor healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean meats and complex carbohydrates — an eating program that’s sustainable for the long term.
- They monitor their progress with frequent weigh-ins or by keeping food diaries.
- They find ways to deal with stress besides overeating, and they get treatment for depression or other conditions.

The truth is that many people at a healthy weight have to work at it. Don’t get discouraged, just get started.

Immunizations Are Not Just for Kids
With flu season around the corner, it’s a good time to review whether you’re up to date with your other immunizations. Certain vaccines are recommended for most adults (with some exceptions), including influenza (flu); tetanus; H1N1 (swine flu); varicella (chicken pox); and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). Other vaccinations may be necessary based on your age, your health history and your potential exposure. Some examples:

**Adults 60 and older** may require protection from pneumonia or zoster (shingles). Those in group situations such as nursing homes are especially vulnerable.

**Employees** in daycare centers, clinics, schools, nursing homes, hospitals or labs need additional vaccines in order to protect themselves and to avoid transmitting diseases to the children or patients they serve. **Example:** Those exposed to blood or blood products should be vaccinated against hepatitis B.

**International travelers and military personnel** may be exposed to illnesses less common in the U.S., such as hepatitis A, polio, yellow fever or meningitis. Recommendations vary for different parts of the world, so check with a travel clinic or go to [http://www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).

**Pregnant women, people with certain medical conditions and young adults** may require special consideration based on their individual needs.

**Important:** In some cases (such as egg allergies), vaccines may not be recommended or special precautions may be needed. Ask your physician to help you choose the appropriate vaccines for you.

Next Month: Secrets of Super Healthy People

**WELL CONNECTIONS:** Take a QuikRisk™ Self Assessment at [www.personalbest.com/extras/eyeaugust10](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/eyeaugust10).