

EYE HEALTH FOR DOGS

10 Foods to Keep Canine Vision Sharp

by Audi Donamor

Key colorful foods, packed with nutrients, protect against eye problems ranging from progressive retinal atrophy and uveitis to cataracts and glaucoma.

Here are 10 foods that are highly regarded in helping prevent and defend against vision problems. Their eye-worthy nutrients include anthocyanins, beta-carotene, carotenoids, glutathione, lycopene, omega-3 essential fatty acids, phytonutrients—and the special partnership of lutein and zeaxanthin, sometimes referred to as “sunscreen for the eyes”.

An easy way to serve these power-packed foods is as a mash. Simply combine a few cups of fruits and vegetables in a food processor with a half-cup of filtered water and blend as a raw pet meal topper. For a cooked topper, chop the fruits and vegetables and place in a medium sized sauce pan with the filtered water and a couple tablespoons of first-pressed olive oil. Simmer gently, cool and serve. Maybe top it all off with a fish or egg.

Blueberries contain two eye-healthy carotenoids: lutein and zeaxanthin. They also deliver anthocyanins, eye-nourishing phytonutrients known to support night vision, according to a study published in the *Journal of Biomedicine and Biotechnology*. University of Oklahoma research suggests that flavonoids like the rutin, resveratrol and quercetin in blueberries may help prevent retinal atrophy. Their selenium and zinc components also support vision, according to a study from the National Eye Institute. Eating blueberries has even been associated with the reduction of eye fatigue, according to *The Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry*.

Broccoli's anti-cancer benefits are well known, but it's also recognized as one of the best vegetables for eye health. A good source of lutein and zeaxanthin, it's also packed with beta-carotene. Don't leave the leaves behind, because they contain even more beta-carotene than the stems and florets. Researchers at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine have found that broccoli and broccoli sprouts protect the retina from free radical damage, which may be due to a compound called sulforaphane that boosts the body's defense against free radicals.



Carrots come in 100 varieties, from deep purple and white to brilliant orange. Each is a storehouse of nutrient power, providing vitamin A, beta-carotene, vitamins C, D, E and K, and riboflavin, niacin, calcium, potassium, phosphorus, sodium, iron, magnesium, manganese, sulphur, copper and iodine. The adage that carrots are good for the eyes is true. They even contain lycopene and lutein, phytonutrients that protect from UVB radiation and free radical damage.

Cold-water fish such as salmon, tuna, cod, haddock and sardines are rich in omega-3s, especially EPA and DHA, which are widely known to be important to cellular health. DHA makes up 30 percent of the fatty acids that comprise the retina. The particularly high levels of omega-3s in sardines add further protection to retinal health, according to researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Eggs are rich in cysteine and sulphur, two components of glutathione. *Cataract Health News* reports that sulphur-containing compounds have been found to protect eyes from cataract formation. Egg yolks contain lutein, and a University of Massachusetts study has found that eating an egg a day raised levels of lutein and zeaxanthin in the blood; at the same time, blood serum lipids and lipoprotein cholesterol concentrations remained stable.

Kale is an excellent source of lutein and zeaxanthin. The American Optometric Association says these special antioxidants act like “internal sunglasses.” Add beta-carotene to the mix and kale serves as a preferred foil to oxidative stress.

Pumpkin's orange color is a sure sign that it's packed with carotenoids like beta-carotene, which help neutralize free radicals. Its lutein and zeaxanthin generally promote eye health and further protect against retinal degeneration. Even pumpkin seeds carry several benefits, including omega-3s, zinc and phytosterols to enhance a dog's immune response.

Sweet potatoes are loaded with both beta-carotene and anthocyanins, the latter high in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

Make vision and diet part of annual exams by a local vet.

Tomatoes are famous for their lycopene, a carotenoid and phytonutrient found in red produce. This powerful antioxidant helps protect against sun damage and retinal degeneration and has been well documented as effective in cancer prevention. Processed tomato products contain higher levels of lycopene than the raw fruit.

Audi Donamor regularly contributes to Animal Wellness Magazine (AnimalWellnessMagazine.com), from which this was adapted and used with permission.

