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**Information about changes to medicines or treatments on the NHS: Changes to the prescribing of lutein and antioxidant vitamins**

NHS guidance states that lutein and antioxidant vitamins are not recommended for routine prescribing on the NHS. This is because there is not enough clear evidence that they are beneficial, and they are associated with some risks.

## What are lutein and antioxidant vitamins used for?

## Lutein and antioxidant vitamins are most commonly taken for an eye condition called age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Although some evidence suggests that some supplements can delay the progression of certain types of AMD in people that have it, more evidence is needed to be sure about the benefits and any risks.

## What options are available instead?

1. **Stop smoking:** If you smoke, quitting can reduce the risk of AMD progressing. If you don't have AMD, quitting smoking can lower your chances of developing it. Seek advice and support from your healthcare professional to help you quit.
2. **Health diet:** Eat a healthy, balanced diet that is rich in wholegrains, fibre, fruits, green leafy vegetables, and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids.
3. **Regular Health Checks:** Ensure your health checks are up to date with your GP. If you have health conditions like a heart problem, diabetes, kidney disease or problems with your circulatory system (including high blood pressure) you should already be having regular health checks. If you’re aged 40 to 74 and don’t have a pre-existing health condition, you should be invited to an NHS Health Check every 5 years. Ask at your GP practice if you haven’t had one.
4. **Purchase supplements:** If you wish to continue taking supplements for eye health, you can buy them from pharmacies and opticians. Consult a healthcare professional and provide information about your medicines and medical history, including smoking and asbestos exposure, as not all supplements are suitable for everyone.

**Important note on beta-carotene**

Some antioxidant supplements for eye health contain beta-carotene. People who smoke, former smokers, and those exposed to asbestos should avoid supplements with beta-carotene, as it has been linked to an increased risk of lung cancer in these groups. Your GP or GP practice pharmacist can provide more information and help you choose the best supplement if you still wish to buy one.

**Further information and support**

If your ophthalmologist or other healthcare professional has advised you to take an ‘AREDS2 formula’ supplement, this would be one containing lutein 10mg, zeaxanthin 2mg, vitamin C 500mg, vitamin E 400 IU, zinc 80mg or 25mg, and copper 2mg. If you are not sure which brands of supplements contain these ingredients, ask your pharmacist for advice.

## Where can I find more information and support?

* You can speak to your local pharmacist, GP, GP practice pharmacist, or the person who prescribed the eye health supplement to you.
* Your local patient group: [add details or remove].
* Information about AMD and the effects of smoking and nutrition on eye health can be found at [www.macularsociety.org](http://www.macularsociety.org)
* The Patients Association can also offer support and advice: [www.patients-association.org.uk/](https://www.patients-association.org.uk/) or call 0800 345 7115.
* Advice on stopping smoking is available at [www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/)
* NHS England: Find out more about the medicines that are being stopped or reduced: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-policy-guidance/> or contact NHS England on 0300 311 22 33.