

Macular Degeneration and vegetable oils

The facts

A recent media campaign has alleged that eating vegetable oils and margarine increases the risk of age-related macular degeneration and that animal fats, like butter, are a better choice. No authoritative health organisation in Australia agrees with this view.

Here are some facts:

- The prevalence of age-related macular degeneration in Australia is increasing with the ageing of the population.
- Very few scientific studies have been conducted into dietary fats and age-related macular degeneration ⁽¹⁻⁶⁾. The results are contradictory.
- Research conducted in Australia found no link between vegetable oils, margarines and the risk of age-related macular degeneration ⁽¹⁾. Other studies support this finding ^(2,3).
- The studies suggesting an association with vegetable fats were conducted in the United States ⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾ where the fats in the diet are significantly different from those used in Australia.

Advice about dietary fats from all authoritative nutrition organisations in Australia and overseas is to limit total fat intake; limit saturated and animal fat in particular; and choose unsaturated margarines and vegetable oils – use in moderation.

**For an authoritative and independent perspective on this issue you may like to visit the website of
CSIRO Health Sciences and Nutrition: www.csiro.au**

1. Smith W et al. Arch Ophthalmol 2000;118:401-4. 2. Mares-Perlman JA et al. Arch Ophthalmol 1995;114:235-6.
3. Heuberger RA et al. Arch Ophthalmol 2001;119:1833-8. 4. Seddon JM et al. Arch Ophthalmol 2001;119:1191-9.
5. Cho E et al. Am J Clin Nutr 2001;73:209-18. 6. Seddon JM et al. Arch Ophthalmol. 2003;121:1728-37.