

Nutrition is everyone's business, and especially Optometrists.

The role of all health professionals in supporting the public health of our communities, towns and nation are at the heart of [Making Every Contact Count](#). This is not about adding another job to an already busy one, or adding to already full consultations, it is about providing opportunistic advice that is consistent and supports individuals to live a healthy lifestyle. It is simply about engaging individuals in conversations about their health and how they might be able to take steps to improve it. So, who better in the nation's health workforce than Optometrists to have these types of conversation with individuals who come in off our high streets to receive eye care, but may also be open to other health ideas.

Why nutrition and eyes?

With the publication of [AREDS study](#), the interest in how nutritional supplements might be useful in age related macular degeneration (AMD) to delay the progression to advanced disease has become particularly important in respect to communication about AMD prevention and management . However, how confident are optometrists if clients/ patients ask about the specific functions of the nutrients which make up the AREDS supplement? Perhaps more importantly, how confident are optometrists in considering whether a client/ patient might benefit from the supplement or could they get the same benefit from their diet. Of course, it is not about giving detailed dietary advice, it can be as simple as asking individuals about if they are thinking about what they eat, perhaps suggesting a few small changes and signposting other services.

It is not just people with AMD who might benefit from support and information about diet, with increasing numbers of people living with diabetes and hypertension who routinely use optometry services, there is a clear role for diet in managing their condition. This is before considering the millions of individuals without health concerns, who due to age related changes in eyesight may seek optometry care. Often these are the same people who the "making every contact count" and "well person clinics" are looking to encourage to improve their lifestyle and diet to reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease. The potential effect of encouraging users of optometry service to make even the simplest of changes, such as just eating 1-2 more pieces of fruit and veg per week would have massive health and cost saving effects to society.

Why this survey?

Although there is clearly a place and potential for an increased role of nutrition in routine practice and business of optometrists, like many health professionals, limited levels of confidence, knowledge and training in this area can be a significant barrier to starting conversations about nutrition with clients/ patients.

Using validated questionnaires used with pharmacists and doctors, we aim in this project to find out how important optometrists feel nutrition is, whether it could add to their practice and identify any potential gaps in knowledge and training. The analysis of these findings will then be used to help inform the design of training packages for optometrists to help support them in having simple conversations about food and nutrition, improving the health of their clients/ patients and community. In the process, it is likely also to enhance the relationship of clients/ patients with their optometrists and so also potentially be good for business.