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Newsletter from the Macular Degeneration Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 531313 Henderson, NV 89053
<http://www.eyesight.org>

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ALFALFA COULD FIGHT VISION LOSS

A condensed version of original article by Tom Webb - Pioneer Press

"Could alfalfa, that old favorite of dairy cows, have a new use in preventing human blindness? Three Minnesota firms are so optimistic that they're investing in this farm-to-pharmaceutical vision. Alfalfa turns out to be rich in lutein, a substance that some research suggests may help prevent an eye disease called macular degeneration.

A separate Minnesota firm, Belle Plaine-based Alfalfa America, expects to produce the first of many batches of lutein next summer, after nine years in development, founder Lance Crombie said.

The activity is part of a renewed interest in probing natural plant materials for their health-giving properties, said Gary Gardner, director of the Center for Plants and Human Health at the University of Minnesota.

As for lutein, the National Eye Institute says on its Web site, "Claims made about an association between lutein and eye health are speculative and should be viewed with caution." But the institute cites several studies suggesting - but not proving - a positive link between lutein and fighting the disease.

Lutein can be obtained from other sources including marigolds and egg yolks, but alfalfa is especially available in these parts. Minnesotans grow 1.4 million acres of alfalfa, which produce about 5 million tons a year. Alfalfa is Minnesota's third-largest cash crop, after corn and soybeans, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Minnesota statistics branch."

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OPTOTABS THE SUPPLEMENT OF CHOICE

We appreciate the support many of our subscribers have provided to the Macular Degeneration Foundation by the purchase of the OPTOTABS formula. This supplement provides the formula identified by the National Institute of Health as high-level antioxidant and also includes lutein and zeaxanthin which have been found beneficial in later studies. To order this product on line go to www.optogon.com or call 1-800-924-4393.

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SCIENTISTS DISCOVER POSSIBLE ROOT OF MACULAR DEGENERATION

wnbc.com

"It appears that a significant number of individuals harbor genes that confer risk for development of macular degeneration," said Dr. Gaetano Barile, of Columbia University Medical Center. Researchers at Columbia have found two variations of normal genes that seem to account for up to three-quarters of all macular degeneration.

The theory is that a trigger, probably an infection, activates the immune system, which should shut down after the infection is gone. However, in people with these defective genes, the immune response continues. "The system is little bit out of whack - it is not as well suppressed or it is activated too much. So if you have infection and you take care of it, there is still lingering inflammation in your eye," said Dr. Rando Allikmets, also of Columbia University Medical Center. "That condition proceeds and goes on for years, and will manifest itself at very late age."

The discovery could lead to a test for patients' predisposition to macular degeneration, as well as measures against the onslaught of the disease. "It heralds promise for developing preventative treatments for individuals that are at risk for the disease," said Barile. For the moment, the discovery does not mean new treatments for people who already have macular degeneration, although that's an area of intense research and there are some promising new therapies.

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CONTACTING MDF

To speak to a support representative directly, you may call 1-888-633-3937. If you reach our voice mail, please speak slowly and distinctly.

ORDERING BOOKS & TAPES

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MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS:

Please make checks payable to Macular Degeneration Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 531313, Henderson, Nevada 89053, or you may use your credit card on our web site <http://www.eyesight.org/Donations/donations.html> . Your contributions make our services available as a support system for macular degeneration patients in the following ways:

1. We provide toll-free lines for personal contact assistance.
2. We mail brochures and other printed materials upon request.
3. We support an award-winning web site that provides the latest up-to-date information.
4. We fund research proposal grants to provide therapies for both the wet and dry form of AMD. Contributions marked "research" are used 100% for research.

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MDF was founded in 1992 by Edmund J. Aleksandrovich Ph.D (a victim of macular degeneration). It provides MD patients and their families with the information necessary to understand the disease, the latest news concerning ways to cope with the disease, and supports the efforts of researchers to find a cure.

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