

Dr. Jennifer Ong “View from The Bay” Interview with Spencer Christian and Janelle Wang

Transcript:

Voice off-screen: The View from the bay starts now

Spencer: Here’s good news: eating the right foods can improve your eyesight. That’s what our next guest says; joining us right now is Bay Area optometrist Dr. Jennifer Ong! Welcome to the show.

Janelle: Hi Dr. Ong. Nice to meet you.

Dr. Ong: Hi, thank you for having me.

Spencer: So, how big a role does our diet play in our vision?

Dr. Ong: A lot of the research definitely shows it can play a big part in how we can prevent certain eye diseases.

Spencer: How about that.

Janelle: Is it the vitamins, or the minerals in it?

Dr. Ong: There are some key nutrients, there are some 6 essential nutrients that have been found to be helpful for preventing certain eye diseases.

Spencer: And what are they? ‘Cause maybe we can keep those in mind.

Dr. Ong: Sure, we want to look at- what I would like to do is bring in the food first, because it is easier to remember it that way, if that’s okay?

Spencer: Sure, we’ve got some photos, so we can go through the list of foods and you can tell us what nutrients (are in each)

Dr. Ong: Spinach is very rich in antioxidants, Lutein, and Zeaxanthin. And that’s going to be one of the more important ingredients for preventing vascular degeneration, so that’s early aging of the macula, the central part of our vision.

Spencer: Would dark, leafy greens be good as well?

Dr. Ong: Very dark foods, like Broccoli, or foods of other the colors, so like corn.

Janelle: Oh, I like corn.

Dr. Ong: Well, a lot of people don’t like their greens, so we like to let them know that there’s an option there.

Janelle: Eggs!

Dr. Ong: Eggs: essential fatty acids. Whole grains have also definitely been found to prevent that early aging that goes on with the eyes.

Spencer: And you’ve got oranges there?

Dr. Ong: We’ve got the oranges, yes, and we know with vitamin C, we’re always told that; have your vitamin C, usually for colds, but it’s also for the eyes. Think about cataracts; cataracts are the aging of the lens of the eye. And the aging of the lens, we can slow it down, slow down the progression of the cataracts with vitamin C, so if you don’t like oranges, there’s always strawberries, green bell peppers, there’s a lot of resources there.

Spencer: Now what about almonds? What is there in almonds that is good for the eyes?

Dr. Ong: So, for almonds we’re thinking more of vitamin E, we’ve got pecans also as an option- some people don’t like nuts, maybe they’re allergic to it, and we also have of course vegetable oils. I like also sunflower seeds. That’s another fun one to eat.

Spencer: Okay, sure.

Janelle: Lots of options.

Dr. Ong: Yes.

Janelle: And then Milk.

Dr. Ong: Milk is rich in zinc, also think whole grains. Again, we're always told to eat whole grains, and so I've discovered two areas where whole grains can cover for other foods.

Janelle: So are supplements just as effective? Like if I take Zinc supplements.

Dr. Ong: Right, we know we're very busy, so it is hard to have a very balanced diet, and actually to have access to fresh foods.

Janelle: Yeah.

Dr. Ong: So we would definitely never say "Oh no, don't take that, only eat your nutrient rich foods- foods with these nutrients."

Spencer: Hopefully we can do both, get the good fresh food and supplement it as well.

Dr. Ong: Yes.

Spencer: So are there foods that are bad for our vision?

Dr. Ong: There has been research that has been released about how high carbohydrate- now we're talking high amounts, and since we're always told to eat in moderation- sometimes we go overboard and don't really follow. So they're looking at that and its effects on the macula. And we like to focus on the positive. We're always told to eat our fruits and vegetables, and we need to continue doing that, and everything else you can eat in moderation.

Janelle: What about carrots? I've heard carrots are good for your eyesight.

Spencer: We've always heard that.

Dr. Ong: Right, and so it is good for your eyesight, but think about, also, 'what can I eat that provides even more than what the carrots provide?' And it's your dark green leafy vegetables. Sure you have the vitamin A in carrots, but you don't have as much of the Lutein, and the Zeaxanthin, those antioxidants.

Spencer: So the carrots wouldn't necessarily contain the essential things we need for best eye maintenance?

Dr. Ong: Right. So get more bang for the buck.

Janelle: So these basically don't improve your eyesight? These just prevent your eyesight from getting worse?

Dr. Ong: Right. So we don't want to give the wrong impression, that it might cure certain eye diseases, either. And one of the things to keep in mind is that the American optometric association definitely recommends that your a comprehensive annual eye exam is the most important thing in preventing eye disease.

Spencer: Dr. Jennifer Ong, thank you so much, and just wanted to let you know that we have more information about Dr. Ong and all these foods on our website, so check it out.

Dr. Ong: Thank you so much for having me.

Janelle: Thank you