

FEATURE—TUFTS UNIVERSITY AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOCUS ON HEALTHY EYES

Intro: Tufts University with the assistance and support of the U-S Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service are looking at ways to keep our eyesight healthy as we age. The USDA's Mark Ennis has more. (1:31)

A PERSON'S DIET NOT ONLY AFFECTS THEIR WEIGHT OR HEART FUNCTION, IT CAN ALSO AFFECT THEIR VISION. A SCIENTIST WITH TUFTS UNIVERSITY AND THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE IS PLAYING A KEY ROLE IN THE STUDY OF PROLONGED VISUAL FUNCTION.

ALLEN TAYLOR, USDA ARS FUNDED RESEARCHER FOR TUFTS UNIVERSITY: Our lab is to ask why people when they get older confront age-related eye diseases such as age-related macular degeneration and cataracts. There should be a renewed commitment to prevention and health maintenance. We've lost sight of the fact that we have an option to do something about our health including maintaining our health by healthier eating.

KEEPING OUR EYES HEALTHY IS VERY IMPORTANT. DOCTOR TAYLOR SAYS THAT OVER EIGHTY PERCENT OF ELDERLY AMERICANS SUFFER FROM CATARACTS AND OVER THIRTY PERCENT HAVE SOME FORM OF AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION.

TAYLOR: Public health care shouldn't just be the treatment of disease, it should be delaying the onset of age-related compromises and disease and that's the kind of research that this building can accomplish and our lab in particular is one of the few labs in the world whose objective is to maintain vision rather than treat already compromised vision known to the elderly. USDA support has been crucial to allow long-term planning of nutrition-based research to occur here at Tufts University.

FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M MARK ENNIS.