Increasingly popular as evidence mounts, sucralose and stevioside are growing in Canada. Consistent evidence of a long-term benefit for weight and type 2 diabetes. Undesirable outcomes like high blood pressure and other health issues like obesity. From all that research, there was no link between the use of artificial sweeteners and changes in body mass index (BMI), which is a measure of weight in relation to height, among the 1,003 people in the randomized controlled trials. They also didn’t find a link between the sweeteners and other outcomes. Among the 405,907 people included in the 30 other studies, the researchers found that artificial sweeteners were tied to a small increase in BMI, weight, waist size, obesity, high blood pressure, heart problems and metabolic syndrome.

Global health price tag could be US$371B a year by 2030

LONDON – Meeting life-saving global health targets by 2030 could require investments by donors and national governments of up to US$88 per person per year, or US$371 billion annually, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday.

In a best case scenario of increasing investment to meet the goals, some 87 million premature deaths could be prevented between now and 2030, and up to 8.4 years of life expectancy could be added in some countries, the WHO said in report.

While most countries can afford the funds needed, the poorest nations will need donor help, it added. The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as the world’s to-do list for the next 15 years. They cover 17 goals and 169 targets aimed at creating a healthier, safer and fairer world by 2030.

“Universal health coverage is ultimately a political choice. It is the responsibility of every country and national government to pursue it,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO’s Director-General, said in a statement about the report. Entitled the “SDG Health Price Tag” and published in The Lancet Global Health journal, the report found that under an “ambitious” scenario, achieving the goals would need investments to rise from $134 billion annually now to $371 billion by 2030.

A less ambitious “progress” scenario – in which the world would get two-thirds or more of the way towards meeting the SDG targets – would need new investments to increase from $104 billion a year to $274 billion, or $41 per person, by 2030.

The report found that 85 percent of the costs could be afforded by national governments, but that 32 of the world’s poorest countries would continue to need donor assistance.

High-income countries were not included, but previous research has shown they can all afford to provide universal health coverage and essential health services to their citizens.

In both scenarios explored in the WHO report, health system investments such as employing more health workers, building and operating new clinics, hospitals and laboratories, and buying medical equipment account for about 75 percent of funding needs. Beyond that, the costs are for medicines, vaccines, syringes and other equipment used to prevent or treat specific diseases, and for activities such as training and health campaigns.

Here’s why you get little floaters in your eye

HAVE YOU ever wondered what causes those little dots and shadows that flit across your vision? Sometimes floaters cause distraction, blurred vision or confusion, and other times you won’t notice because your brain adapts to environmental changes.

Floaters are caused by debris floating into your eyeball and generally, they are nothing to be concerned about. Eyeballs are coated in a vitreous jelly which debris floats on top of. If the debris float over your retina it will cause a shadow which creates a dark spot dancing in front of you.

Floaters are more likely to occur as we age, because the eyeball jelly softens and strands of collagen appear. This is known as posterior vitreous detachment, and as you reach 60 or 70 years old the collagen may clump together and shrink causing more floaters.

Generally, this is fine but can cause pulling on the retina which may cause a retinal tear, which can also result in further floater action in your eye. If you suspect you have a tear, or are worried about floaters, see your optician.

“In the majority of cases, floaters are a normal part of the aging process,” says Daniel Hardiman-McCartney, Clinical Adviser for the College of Optometrists. “However, occasionally a sudden increase in floaters may be a sign of a more serious eye disease such as a retinal detachment. If you notice an increase in floaters, you should contact your optometrist straight away.

“Your optometrist will be able to assess whether the causes of the floaters and establish whether you need to be seen by an ophthalmologist. If you cannot do this you should seek urgent attention from your local eye casualty department.”

Review of studies show artificial sweeteners may not be risk free

People hoping to lose a few pounds by substituting artificial sweeteners for regular sugar may end up disappointed, suggests a fresh look at past research.

For the analysis, they looked through the medical literature for studies examining possible links between artificial sweeteners and weight or health issues like obesity. The researchers found seven randomized controlled trials, which are considered the gold-standard of medical research. Some of the trials, for example, compared people who drank artificially sweetened beverages to people who drank water. The researchers also found 30 studies that followed people using the sweeteners over time. They found no link between the use of artificial sweeteners and changes in body mass index (BMI), which is a measure of weight in relation to height, among the 1,003 people in the randomized controlled trials. They also didn’t find a link between the sweeteners and other outcomes.

Among the 405,907 people included in the 30 other studies, the researchers found that artificial sweeteners were tied to a small increase in BMI, weight, waist size, obesity, high blood pressure, heart problems and metabolic syndrome.

“I think it’s cause for some caution and rethinking whether or not these products are without any effect,” Azad told Reuters Health. The researchers caution, however, that the studies that followed people over time may be biased since artificial sweeteners are promoted as a treatment for conditions like obesity or diabetes. Also, the randomized controlled trials were relatively short. Azad also said they were not able to look at individual sweeteners.

“It’s possible that different sweeteners have different effects, but we were not able to examine that because of the studies available,” she said.

The risks and benefits of these sweeteners need to be evaluated, but the science examining those benefits is lacking.

Have you ever wondered what causes those little dots and shadows that flit across your vision?