Lutein and Zeaxanthin Improve Vision in Healthy People Too

Scientists have long known that higher intakes of the carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin may help prevent age-related macular degeneration, a common cause of blindness. Now, investigators at the University of Georgia have discovered that the compounds may also improve visual performance in healthy young people with normal vision exposed to glaring light conditions.

The researchers gave 12 mg supplemental lutein and zeaxanthin to 40 subjects each day for six months. The subjects demonstrated improved visual performance under glaring light conditions over the course of the test period compared with baseline. The scientists believe that lutein and zeaxanthin helped improve visual function by increasing macular pigment optical density.

Macular pigment, which consists of lutein, zeaxanthin, and a related pigment, meso-zeaxanthin, is responsible for reducing discomfort and maintaining visual performance under glaring light conditions.

These findings complement an earlier placebo-controlled study showing that lutein/zeaxanthin supplementation improved visual performance under low light conditions.

—Dale Kiefer
