Lutein, Zeaxanthin Deficiencies Linked to Arterial Disease

Higher blood levels of lutein and zeaxanthin may be associated with optimal cardiovascular health, according to a recent report. While these carotenoid nutrients are associated with protection against macular degeneration (a common cause of vision loss), their effects on cardiovascular health have been less clear. Scientists compared blood samples from adults with coronary artery disease to those of healthy individuals. The disease-free subjects had significantly higher plasma levels of lutein and zeaxanthin than did people with coronary artery disease. Higher levels of lutein and zeaxanthin were also associated with higher levels of natural killer cells, an important component of immune health.

Scientists believe that lutein and zeaxanthin may confer these protective benefits by reducing oxidative stress.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

Vitamin K Supports Bone Health, Prevents Fractures

Increasing one's intake of vitamin K boosts bone strength and prevents fractures, according to a recent review of the medical literature. Vitamin K1 (phytonadione) is found in dietary sources such as green leafy vegetables, while vitamin K2 (menaquinone) is manufactured by microorganisms in the gut. Scientists who reviewed trials in which adults supplemented with oral vitamin K for six months or longer found numerous studies indicating that vitamin K1 and K2 help reduce bone loss. Furthermore, supplementation with vitamin K2 reduced rates of all types of fracture, including hip and vertebral fractures.

Vitamin K may help support healthy bone mass and prevent fractures by its effects on osteocalcin, a protein considered crucial for healthy bone matrix. Along with calcium, magnesium, vitamin D, and boron, vitamin K may be regarded as an essential nutrient for promoting lifelong bone health.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND
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