

Eye on Health

Diets Lack Nutrients That May Prevent Blindness, Researchers Say

(NAPSA)—A new study from Tufts University in Boston says that people are not getting enough of the nutrients shown to prevent age-related blindness.

Studies show that certain nutrients, particularly antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin, help preserve eye health. However, the recent study indicates that most people do not get enough zeaxanthin and lutein in their diets to prevent Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD). AMD gradually and permanently destroys central vision, which is necessary for activities such as driving, reading or watching television. It is the leading cause of blindness in American adults over age 60.

According to the study, the general population consumes less than one-third of the suggested 6 milligrams of zeaxanthin and lutein daily in food. Teenagers eat 50 percent fewer fruits and vegetables—common sources of lutein and zeaxanthin—than their parents.

The study also showed that women's lutein intake is roughly 15 percent above men's, but that men consume 40 percent more zeaxanthin than women. Some experts suggest that this is due to different eating habits. Lutein is found in dark-green leafy vegetables, and may be more common in diets including a lot of salads; zeaxanthin is found in brightly



colored foods such as corn and peppers, and so may be more prevalent in diets including snacks such as corn chips and salsa.

Corn, peaches, persimmons, mangoes, peppers and eggs are among the best sources of dietary zeaxanthin. Because most people lack zeaxanthin and lutein in their diets, experts often recommend taking nutritional supplements. While lutein is better known, more consumer information about zeaxanthin is becoming available at Web sites such as www.ezeyes.info. The natural zeaxanthin used in vitamin supplements is derived from marigold flowers.

Dr. Stuart Richer, optometry section chief of Chicago's Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, is conducting a clinical study to learn more about zeaxanthin's effect on AMD. He says, "It makes sense to include zeaxanthin in the diet at an early age at a low dose, while increasing the dose with age."