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Antioxidants may need a boost

Antioxidant vitamins and mineral supplements in the United States have created a multi-billion dollar industry as well as some controversy. Many health professionals believe that simply eating a proper diet provides adequate levels of all these nutrients. Comparing the estimated average requirement (the estimated intake of a vitamin or mineral that meets the needs of 50 percent of the healthy population) for some of the antioxidants to actual dietary intakes yields surprising results, according to Chris Pritsos, professor and chair of the University's Department of Nutrition.

Only about 20 percent of Americans get enough vitamin C to meet or exceed the requirement. This means that 80 percent of Americans take in less than the amount sufficient to protect half of the population. Vitamin E intake levels for men are low as well. Taking a daily low-dose antioxidant supplement containing 60 to 100 milligrams Vitamin C and 12 to 15 milligrams Vitamin E could provide the additional antioxidant intake necessary for better health. At these low levels, there is no potential harm from too much of the antioxidant compounds. Taking low-dose antioxidant supplements is not an alternative to eating a healthy diet; however, it can provide some added protection, Pritsos says.

Ten Things You Didn't Know About...



Mars

By Wendy Calvin

- 1** Three orbiting spacecraft and two rovers on the surface are returning data from the red planet daily. The latest from all the missions is available at <http://mars.jpl.nasa.gov>
- 2** The first U.S. spacecraft to Mars was Mariner 4, launched Nov 28, 1964. It flew by the planet July 14, 1965. Images from the mission captured a pockmarked, cratered surface similar to the moon's.
- 3** The Viking mission, two orbiters and two landers, operated from 1976 to 1980 and revealed the planet's geologic diversity and ancient scoured channels suggesting that water once flowed across the surface.
- 4** Mars is home to the tallest volcano and deepest canyon in the solar system. The summit of Olympus Mons is about 75,000 feet above the surrounding plains. The deepest portions of the Valles Marineris are six times deeper than the Grand Canyon in Arizona.
- 5** Of the many thousands of meteorites found on Earth, 34 of them have been identified as coming from Mars. Collectively they are called SNC's for "Shergotty, Chassigny and Nakhla," the first three recognized as being different from other meteorites and in a class of their own.
- 6** The average surface temperature of Mars is minus 80 degrees Fahrenheit. For Earth, it is 50 F.
- 7** A Mars day, called a Sol, is 24 hours, 37 minutes and 23 seconds long. A Mars year is nearly two Earth years, or 687 Earth days.
- 8** Mars has a very thin atmosphere, composed primarily of carbon dioxide, and the surface pressure is about the same as Earth's atmosphere at 100,000 feet above sea level. The pressure and temperature are both so low that liquid water is not stable on the surface today.
- 9** We have no conclusive evidence that there was life on Mars, but scientists keep looking. We hope that with improved instruments on future rovers and landers we'll determine whether life existed on our sister planet.
- 10** You can find global image and topography maps using data from Mars Global Surveyor and Mars Odyssey orbiters at Google Mars: <http://www.google.com/mars/>

Wendy Calvin was an original member of the Mars Rover Mission science team that studied the planet via the rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, which landed in January 2003. Calvin is currently a Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter color imager/context camera science team member, as well as a geological sciences professor at the University of Nevada, Reno.