



### Vitamin O marketers full of hot air

THE art of salesmanship is intended to embellish the image of a product. Claims about nutritional supplements often contain statements that are not technically false but are misleading.

There is often a grain of truth in the isolated sound bites of information presented in a sales pitch. But when these sound bites are combined, bits of truth are extrapolated to the point of being totally false. This can result in wasted money and even potentially harmful effects to product users.

A great example of stretching science way out of shape is a product called Vitamin O. This product is little more than water with added oxygen. It demonstrates how the clever interweaving of truth can result in very misleading information.

►True: The body needs an adequate supply of oxygen to function well.

►False: Product promotion implications that Vitamin O contains substantial oxygen in just a few drops a day.

►Fact: This supplement contains a mixture of salted water with about 3 percent oxygen in solution. A 2-ounce bottle of Vitamin O would supply about one

tenth the oxygen your lungs absorb in just a single breath of air. At the typical price of \$20 per bottle, each breath of air provides \$200 worth of oxygen!

►False: Vitamin O.

►Fact: There is no such vitamin. The term is just marketing hype. By definition, vitamins are chemically complex micronutrients (required in tiny amounts) that must be obtained from the diet since the body cannot make them at all or cannot make them in amounts adequate to meet body needs. The "vitamin" name implies that oxygen is required by the body in a dietary form. Oxygen is not normally obtained from the diet and is not a dietary vitamin. Oxygen is a simple chemical element, not a complex compound like a vitamin.

►False: Vitamin O supplies the pure oxygen you need.

►Fact: The human body needs oxygen, but the body does not need to drink pure oxygen. The body carefully adjusts its oxygen intake to meet energy demands yet prevent excessive amounts of free or "pure" oxygen in body fluids. Excess oxygen is dangerous and can cause damage to cell membranes and the genetic material called DNA. In fact, the body

has many mechanisms to neutralize excess oxygen. This is one reason why antioxidant nutrients and other antioxidant substances in foods are important for good health.

►Fact: In March 1999, the Federal Trade Commission filed a complaint in federal court claiming the marketers of Vitamin O were making false and unsubstantiated health claims in their advertising. These ads were marketed in many of the larger newspapers and magazines in the nation. These ads included claims that Vitamin O could cure many serious diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and lung disease.

►Fact: Last week, the individual who controls two companies marketing Vitamin O agreed to pay \$375,000 for consumer redress to settle the FTC charges.

►Fact: Rose Creek Health Products and Staff of Life Inc., also known as R-Garden, will be prohibited from making any more unsupported health claims.

►Sad fact: These companies will still be able to use the Vitamin O name and will still be able to sell this expensive water with a dash of oxygen.

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