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## Can vitamins cut violence? State tests theory on inmates

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The cartoon character Popeye insisted that spinach made muscles strong. Parents have told their children that "an apple a day" will protect their health. But of all the claims made for the benefits of nutrition, who would believe that a daily vitamin supplement might reduce violent crime?

Well, some California scientists would. Although the connection is still debated, they've made a strong enough case that

Presley, D-Riverside, is now sponsoring a bill to test vitamin supplements among adult prisoners.

"I'm really excited about the potential," said Presley, who sponsored the legislation five years ago that allowed testing at the youth authority. "It's been slow. I wish we could have the results tomorrow. But the potential for reducing violence is tremendous, and in a violent society like ours we have to explore all avenues."

The chief scientist on the current study, which compared the behavior of more than 400 inmates, is Stephen J.

Schoenthaler, a professor of sociology and criminal justice at California State University, Stanislaus.

Because California law normally forbids any kind of health experiments involving prisoners, the state set up unusually strict guidelines for this study. All participants were voluntary. Some received vitamin supplements, some received placebos. No one, including Schoenthaler, knew which group was receiving the actual dose until the tests were completed. The program was administered through a scientific review

board headquartered at the University of California, Berkeley.

"In essence, I was kept at arms length from my own study," Schoenthaler said. "But I agreed to it because everyone wanted this program to be very clean." He said the results are still being analyzed, but that the consensus seems to be "the preliminary findings are sufficient for legislation to expand the program to adult prisoners."

Schoenthaler, who has been studying

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### DISCOVERY

state legislators passed a special exemption to allow "biomedical" testing of prisoners, in this case feeding vitamins to juveniles incarcerated by the California Youth Authority.

The final results of that study are due later this year. But the early findings suggest that disciplinary problems did drop among juvenile offenders given vitamin supplements. State Senator Robert

