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Lebanese pita extracts with presence of trace elements: hazard assessment

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Introduction

Among Trace Elements (TE) that can be present in food, some are known to be toxic and must be monitored. Regarding food safety, it is relevant to study the case of the pita, since it represents a large part of the daily diet of the Lebanese population. In a previous study, the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) analyzed the presence of several TE (arsenic, cadmium, cobalt, chromium, mercury, nickel and lead) in white Lebanese pita. Although the toxicity of each TE is known individually, it is important to test the toxicity of the mixture of TE, present in the bread, in order to check the presence of "cocktail" effects between TE, especially synergism.

Materials & Methods

Sample Preparation

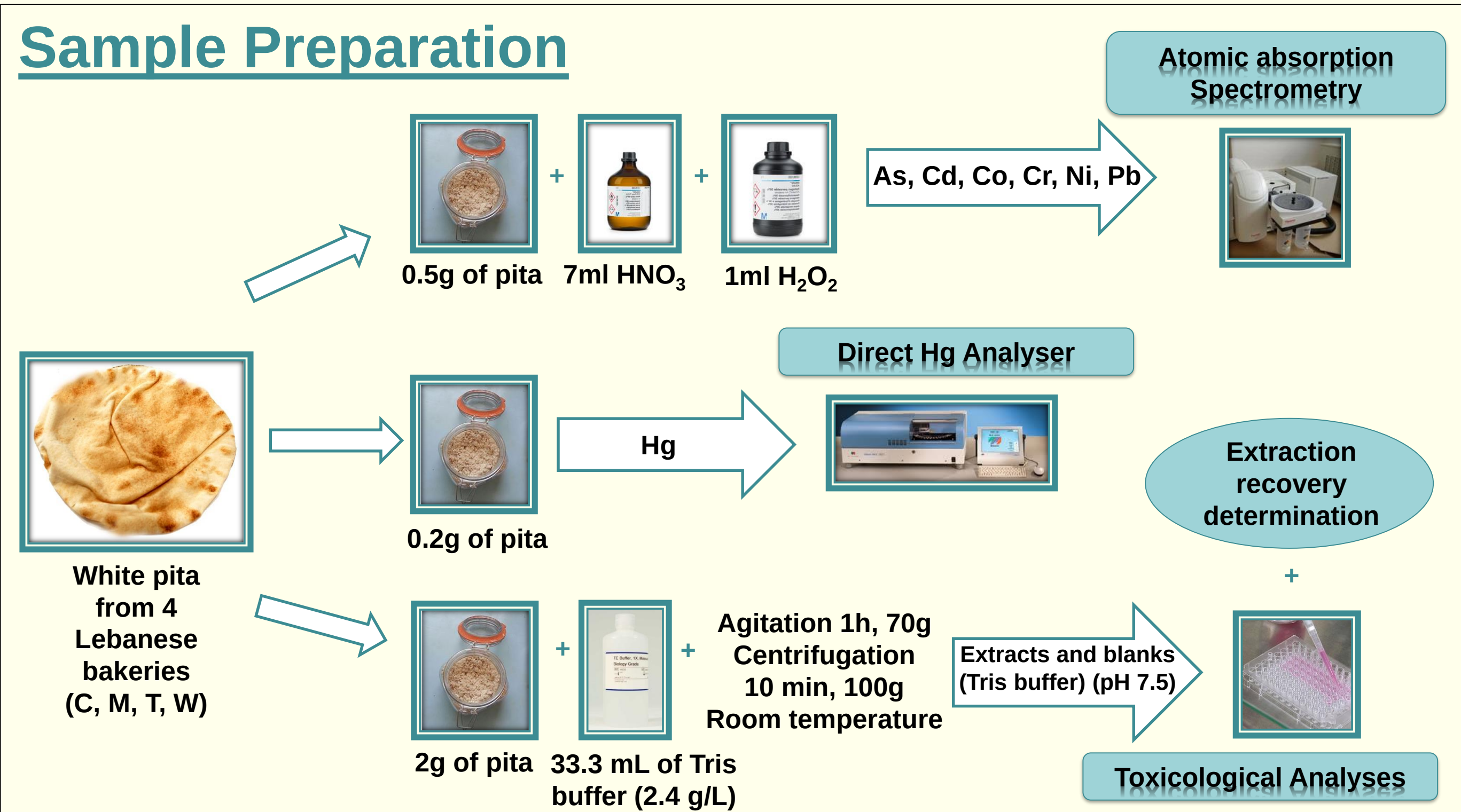


Figure 1: Sample preparation for chemical and toxicological analyses of trace elements (As, Cd, Co, Cr, Ni, Pb and Hg) in white Lebanese pita.

Cell Model

HepG2 human hepatoma cell line, with enzymatic activities (phase I and II metabolism) and a functional protein P53.¹

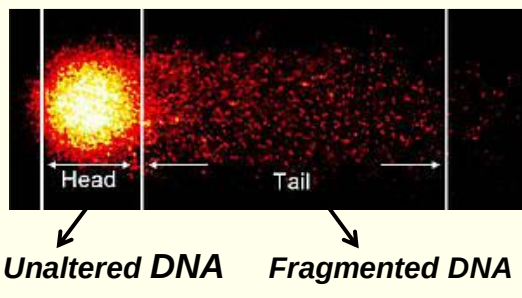
Cytotoxicity

Resazurin assay measurement of cell viability after 2h of incubation with the dye and reduction by the mitochondrial enzymes, from blue resazurin (weakly fluorescent) to red resorufin (highly fluorescent).²

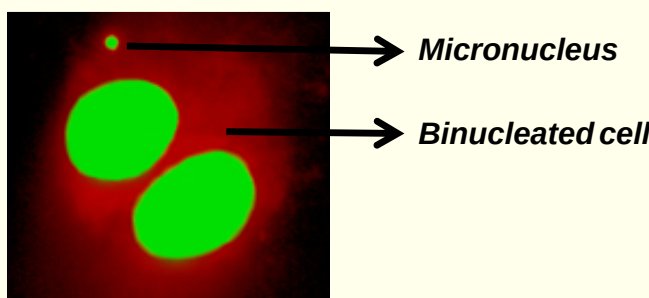
Oxidative Stress

Cellular Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) detection by the oxidation of 2',7'-dichlorodihydrofluorescein diacetate (H₂DCFDA) into a highly fluorescent dye, 2',7'-dichlorofluorescein (DCF).³

- Comet assay



- Micronucleus assay



- Ames test

Measurement of DNA single and double strand breaks and alkali-labile lesions, after an electrophoresis step in alkaline conditions (pH 13) and DNA staining with a fluorescent dye, propidium iodide.⁴

Micronuclei counting in the cytoplasm of interphase cells (performed according to the OECD 487 guideline). Micronuclei are formed from an entire chromosome or an acentric fragment of a chromosome. Reading is performed by fluorescence microscopy after staining with acridine orange.⁵

Bacterial reverse mutation measurement (performed according to the OECD 471 guideline), on *Salmonella typhimurium* TA 98 strain, detecting the presence of gene mutations⁶.

Results/Discussion

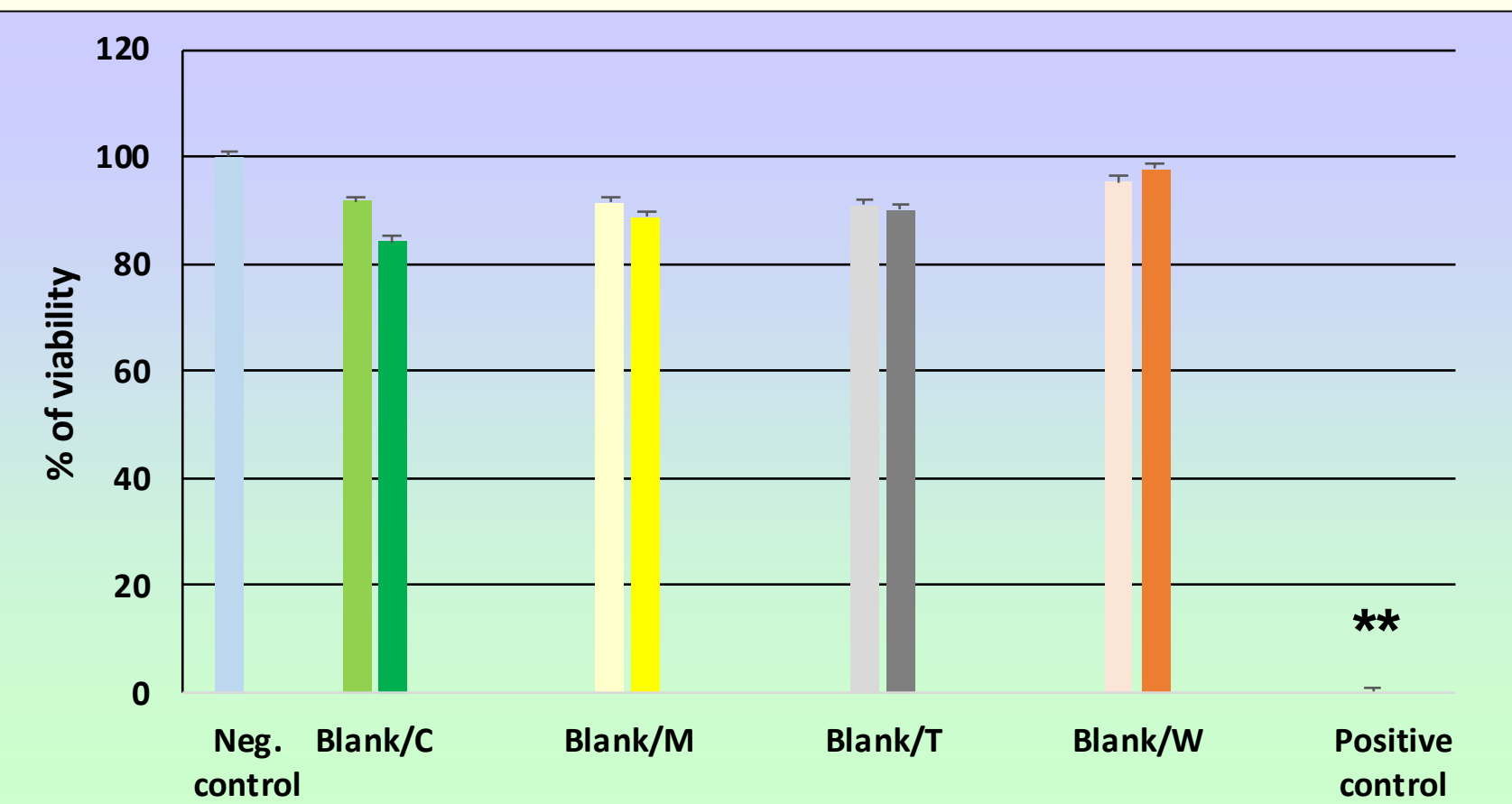


Figure 2: Cell viability determined with the resazurin assay after 24h exposure of HepG2 cells with 4 pita extracts. ** P < 0.01, significantly different from negative control. Positive control: Sodium Dodecyl Sulfate 3% (m/v), 3 independent experiments. Negative control raw data: 3 923 571.

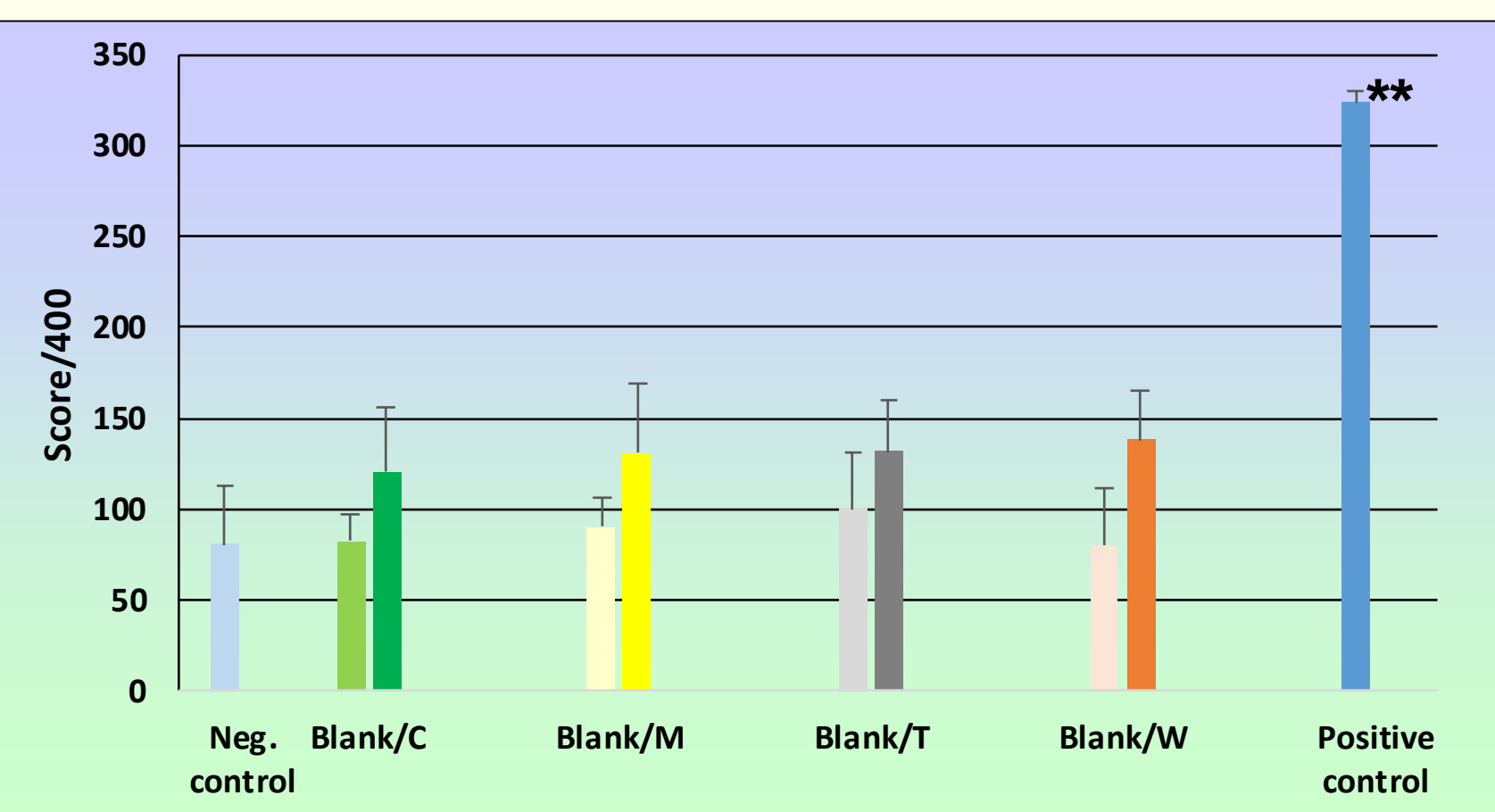


Figure 4: DNA damage determined with the comet assay after 24h exposure of HepG2 cells with 4 pita extracts. ** P < 0.01, significantly different from negative control. Positive control: Methylmethanesulfonate (50 μM), 3 independent experiments. Negative control score: 80/400 (maximal score).

Score = (0x% of cells in class 0) + (1x% of cells in class 1) + (2x% of cells in class 2) + (3x% of cells in class 3) + (4x% of cells in class 4)

❖ The chemical analysis (Table 1) indicates a different TE content of pita according to the bakeries:

- a very high level of nickel (1292 μg/kg) in pita made by bakeries M and T, despite the fact that the extraction efficiency is lower than 50%.
- a higher chromium level (362 μg/kg) for pita C, with an extraction yield of 73%
- presence of lead in pita C, T and W at concentrations of 259, 215 and 203 μg/kg respectively, close to the limit allowed in Lebanon.
- cadmium at levels between 5.77 and 8.69 μg/kg, more than 20 times lower than the Lebanese standard with an average extraction recovery of 65%.

Conclusion

Pita extracts from 4 different Lebanese bakeries induced oxidative stress leading to chromosomal damage (results to be confirmed). Each extract will be tested at different concentrations to demonstrate dose effects. The chemically quantified TE will be evaluated individually at the representative concentrations found in each extract to check the impact of TE alone, in order to highlight any interactions.

Table 1: Trace Elements chemical composition of different pita (C, M, T, W).

Concentrations are expressed in weight of the dry matter. N.D. = not determined

TE	Concentrations of MTE in the pita C (μg/kg)	Extraction recovery for pita C	Concentrations of MTE in the pita M (μg/kg)	Extraction recovery for pita M	Concentrations of MTE in the pita T (μg/kg)	Extraction recovery for pita T	Concentrations of MTE in the pita W (μg/kg)	Extraction recovery for pita W	Maximum level in bread (Lebanese norm) (μg/kg) [7]
Ni	N.D.	-	1292.14 ± 0.17	46	1539.6 ± 0.07	N.D.	364.82 ± 0.02	49	-
As	321.10 ± 19.81	79	234.64 ± 21.96	78	204.3 ± 2.38	N.D.	399.5 ± 7.13	74	-
Hg	0.89 ± 0.06	58	0.73 ± 0.10	64	0.51 ± 1.66	N.D.	0.70 ± 0.15	56	-
Cd	5.77 ± 1.77	70	6.47 ± 0.27	61	7.33 ± 0.01	N.D.	8.69 ± 1.79	65	200
Co	84.24 ± 2.04	66	91.09 ± 2.93	62	87.2 ± 0.05	N.D.	86.70 ± 4.62	63	-
Cr	362.76 ± 10.18	73	40.37 ± 2.17	81	46.84 ± 13.6	N.D.	15.53 ± 1.58	76	-
Pb	259.10 ± 6.97	61	73.98 ± 4.60	60	214.99 ± 7.18	N.D.	203.13 ± 30.38	59	200

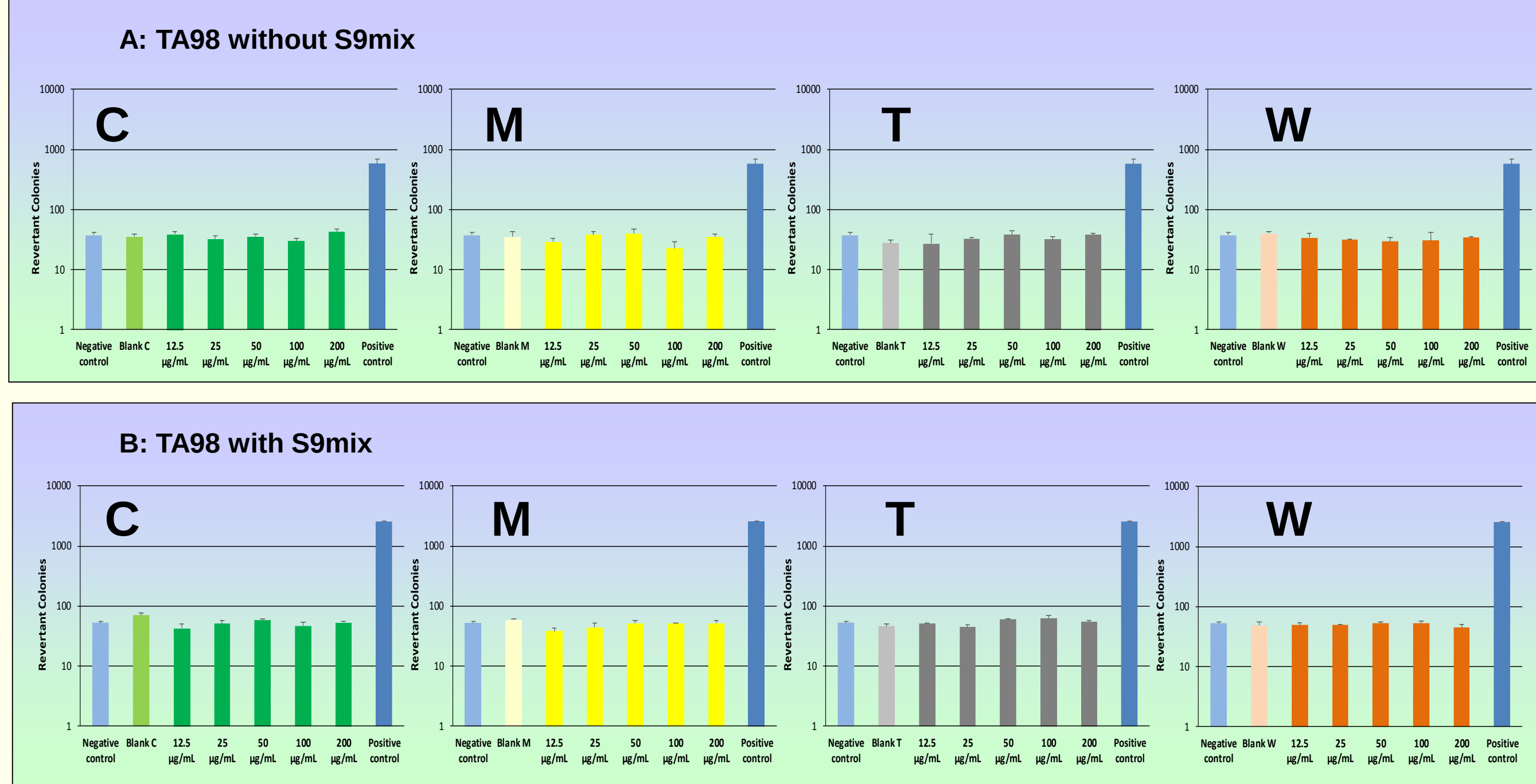


Figure 6: Number of revertant colonies measured in the Ames test on the TA98 strain in absence (A) and in presence (B) of S9 mix with 5 different concentrations (12.5 to 200 μg/mL) of Lebanese pita extracts (one independent experiment). Positive controls: 2-Nitrofluorene (2 μg/plate) without S9 mix, 2-Aminoanthracene (2.5 μg/plate) with S9 mix.

- ❖ None of the extracts, from 4 different bakeries, were cytotoxic (Fig. 2) but they all induced a positive response in the DCFDA assay (x 4.5 on average), indicating the presence of ROS (Fig. 3) after 24h exposure.
- ❖ This effect did not lead to an increase in DNA breaks since the comet test is negative (Fig. 4), even in the presence of the fpg enzyme detecting specifically oxidative damage (data not shown).
- ❖ The Ames test used to detect gene mutations was negative with TA 98 (Fig. 6) and TA 100 (data not shown), in the absence or presence of an exogenous metabolism system (S9 mix) whatever the extract.
- ❖ On the other hand, the micronucleus test showed a significant increase (x 3.4 to 8) in the number of breaks and/or chromosome losses in the 4 extracts (Fig. 5), especially for the M extract, which has a high nickel content (1.29 mg/ kg), without strong cytotoxic effects for all the extracts (less than 20%).