

Tips on Taking Calcium

Calcium has long been determined to be a critical factor in bone health. Where good availability of calcium in the system aids in maintaining strong bones, too little calcium has proven to be detrimental to bone health, thus leading to stress fractures and osteoporosis. Certain daily practices such as taking part in weight bearing exercise as well as proper calcium intake can ensure a lifetime of bone health.

It is important that you know where to find calcium and some of the ideal situations which will promote optimal calcium absorption. Calcium can be most naturally ingested in the diet (dairy, almonds, fish, and green leafy veggies), however supplementation via pill, liquid, candied, or powdered forms has more recently been promoted as a convenient means to providing the body with adequate supply mainly because of ease and cost effectiveness of these supplements. They are, in fact, very safe and effective means of calcium ingestion so long as they are taken at times suitable for optimal absorption.

Calcium absorption from the gut (after ingestion) into the bloodstream (upon digestion) can be a tricky science because calcium tends to bind with other ingested substances and can easily be eliminated from the body without a trace. One essential part of calcium absorption is that Vitamin D must also be present for calcium absorption. Approximately 200 IU per day of Vitamin D is needed for someone under the age of 50. This essential vitamin is most commonly formed in the body from sunlight's contact with the skin, and can also be gotten from Vitamin D fortified foods, and supplements. It is very easy to overlook the necessity of this vitamin when there is so much emphasis on calcium intake, so make sure your diet or supplemental sources of calcium also contain vitamin D.

Calcium intake can be a tricky process but with positive and lasting effects on your health. Always contact your doctor or health care

professional for any questions regarding further information on calcium supplementation. Please make note of the following tips which may help ensure optimal calcium absorption and preserved bone strength for years to come.

The Do's and Don'ts of taking Calcium:

Do:

- Take 1,000 mg per day of calcium and at least 200 IU of Vitamin D, whether that is in the form of supplements or built into your diet.
- Take supplements with meals to aid in absorption.
- Spend 15-30 minutes a day in the sunlight (with skin exposed) to promote Vitamin D production
- Check with your doctor before taking calcium supplements while taking thyroid hormones, corticosteroids, tetracycline, or iron pills.
- Complement calcium intake with daily weight bearing exercise for maximal bone strength

Don't:

- take calcium supplements with caffeine, wheat bran, high phosphate foods, or spinach (calcium oxalates) because they all decrease the body's ability to absorb calcium
- take more than 2,500 milligrams of calcium because this may cause kidney stones
- take calcium with H-2 blockers (Zantac or Pepcid), or proton pump inhibitors (Nexium or Prilosec) because they may inhibit calcium absorption (find out from your doctor optimal calcium supplements with these medications).
- Take all 1,000 milligrams at once, instead space them out throughout the day for optimal absorption.

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