

# Calcium Take it Safely!

by Margy Squires

For years medical professionals have been advising women to take 1200-1500 mg of calcium to prevent osteoporosis. Then a landmark study in May 2012 suggested too much supplemental calcium raised the risk of heart attack and stroke in women<sup>1</sup>. Suddenly, calcium became the black sheep of supplements and people were advised to get their calcium from food sources only.



In *The Truth about Calcium*, you'll find all the details that will be omitted here to conserve space. But I want to remind women (and men) that the case against calcium is misinformation at its worst so I hope you are not one of the many who tossed out their calcium with their common sense!

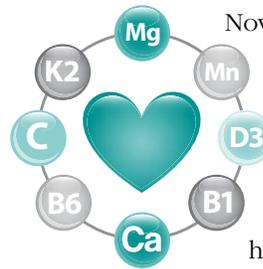
I know you want to be a good patient and follow doctor's orders. While that may seem a sensible strategy in light of the risks you're hearing, there's more to the calcium story. I'm going to explain how to take calcium safely. Supplementing calcium requires only two basic rules. **Rule One: Take only 500 mg at a time.** "Calcium absorption is best when a person consumes no more than 500 mg at one time" states the National Institutes of Health (NIH). If you take in too much – more than you can absorb or use – the body must store it. So it does so – in cells, tissues and arteries, places excess calcium does not belong. Only 1% of calcium is outside of the bones. **Rule Two: Maximize absorption and utilization.** Don't take calcium alone! Calcium has several friends that it needs to get any beneficial jobs done in the human body. These "friends" are commonly called cofactors and they can be vitamins or other minerals. When you balance calcium with its cofactors, it is not only safe, it's beneficial to your heart, bones and health!

Why do you need calcium? According to the NIH, the body needs calcium for strong bones and teeth, for muscles to move and nerves to carry messages between the brain and the rest of the body. Calcium helps blood vessels move too and is required for the release of certain hormones and enzymes necessary for different functions within the body. In short, calcium is needed for quality of life.

 The National Osteoporosis Foundation states most Americans do not get enough calcium in their diet. Their website advises if you supplement, make sure you add up the calcium amounts in both dietary sources and supplements when calculating your optimal daily total.

But why do you need cofactors? Let's illustrate. Almost everybody knows calcium is taken for bones. But it's

magnesium that is the boss, instructing vitamin D to transport calcium into the bone. Without magnesium, calcium can't get a ride from D. So for bone health, make sure you have magnesium and D at normal levels by getting blood tests for both. Optimal magnesium in red blood cells is 5.5 ng/mL per Thomas Romano, M.D. and optimal D3 is 50 ng/mL per the Vitamin D Council.



Now take a look at the heart. Muscle contraction (including the heart) requires magnesium to relax and calcium to constrict, resulting in a rhythm for movement. The same principle holds true for blood vessels; too little magnesium is found in hypertension, a cardiac risk factor. So any functional movement requires a balance between calcium and magnesium.

One more thing about rule two. Form matters! Since you want your body to both absorb and use the calcium you take, make sure it's organic. To Your Health uses both Albion<sup>®</sup> organic minerals and Aquamin<sup>®</sup> forms.

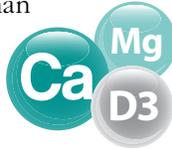
You may be asking, what does the research say? Good question! You'll be happy to know that authors of a 2014 published article challenge the association of calcium to cardiac risk<sup>2</sup>. The authors stated the controversial 2012 study may not be valid as it was "based on the methods of patient self-reporting of calcium intake and cardiovascular events". Therefore, "until more confirmatory data are available, physicians should not be dissuaded from prescribing calcium supplements", especially if the patient has suboptimal calcium.

Regarding calcium's cofactors, data from the Framingham Heart Study shows that magnesium intake plays a protective role against artery calcification (deposits of calcium in arteries)<sup>3</sup>. Arterial calcification is associated with stroke and fatal coronary heart disease.

*Continued*

## Calcium *continued*

When vitamin D accompanied calcium, data analysis from a subgroup of 36,282 women in the Women's Health Initiative study was impressive. The researchers concluded that calcium plus D "decreased the risk of total breast, and colorectal cancers and did not change the risk of fractures or total mortality." They went on to state that the benefits of the combination "may be more important than the skeletal effects and should be considered when evaluating these supplements".<sup>4</sup> Thus taking organic magnesium and D would provide even better results!



### Summary

So if you are intolerant of dairy (the primary calcium food source) or need extra calcium, you can supplement safely. Just remember your two rules! Take organic bioavailable calcium 500 mg or less at a time with its friends or cofactors. For overall health, take a multiple with at least a 2:1 calcium to magnesium ratio, such as in Multi-Gold™.



To supplement specifically for bones, take a combination of magnesium and calcium that also contains vitamin D3, manganese, vitamin K2 and boron, a bone supporting formula like Fibro-Care Cal™. So there you have it, the rest of the story!

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### More to Know Online

- ◆ Advance Your Health
- ◆ Calcium & Magnesium, the Dance of Life
- ◆ The Truth About Calcium
- ◆ The Vitamin D Dilemma

## Health POINTS

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### HOW MUCH CALCIUM?

| Life Stage              | Recommended Daily Amount |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Adults 19–50 years      | 1,000 mg                 |
| Men 51–70 years         | 1,000 mg                 |
| Women 51–70 years       | 1,200 mg                 |
| Adults 71 years & older | 1,200 mg                 |

Source: Office of Dietary Supplements (NIH)

### REFERENCES

1. Li K et al. Associations of dietary calcium intake and calcium supplementation with myocardial infarction and stroke risk and overall cardiovascular mortality in the Heidelberg cohort of the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition study (EPIC-Heidelberg). *Heart*. 2012 Jun;98(12):920-5.
2. Chrysant SG, Chrysant GS. Controversy regarding the association of high calcium intake and increased risk for cardiovascular disease. *J Clin Hypertens* (Greenwich). 2014 Aug;16(8):545-50.
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4. Bolland MJ et al. Calcium and vitamin D supplements and health outcomes: a reanalysis of the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) limited-access data set. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2011 Oct;94(4):1144-9.