

CALCIUM

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

HOW MUCH DOES THE BODY NEED A DAY?

Persons aged 11-24 years as well as pregnant and lactating women need 1,200 to 1,500 milligrams of calcium. Premenopausal women from 25-49 years and post menopausal women taking estrogen need 1,000 milligrams, which is equivalent to drinking 3 glasses of milk. Postmenopausal women not taking estrogen need 1,500 milligrams. Adult men from 25-64 years need 1,000 milligrams. These are based on recommendations from the National Institutes of Health.

WHAT ARE FACTORS THAT MAY BLOCK CALCIUM?

- Alcohol: alcohol may inhibit calcium absorption and interfere with the utilization of vitamin D needed for calcium absorption.
- Smoking: studies suggest that female smokers may lose about twice as much bone mass as nonsmokers.

SODIUM

High sodium diets appear to result in a 20 percent greater excretion of calcium by the kidneys.

HIGH-FAT FOODS

Excessive fat in the diet combines with calcium, converting it to insoluble fatty substances that the body cannot absorb.

LACK OF EXERCISE

Physical activity, especially "weight bearing" exercise such as walking and biking, are thought to promote calcium utilization. Exercise may even trigger new bone growth. Caffeine: caffeine increases the body's need for calcium.

FIBER

Diets high in fiber have been shown to drop calcium levels in the body.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DEFICIENCY?

Approximately 60% of Americans are deficient in calcium intake. Symptoms of severe calcium deficiency include irregular heartbeat, muscle spasms, convulsions, dementia,

stunted growth, rickets (softening of the bone) and osteomalacia (adult rickets). Severe signs of calcium deficiencies are rare. More widespread and alarming are the consequences of mild calcium deficiencies, such as osteoporosis. Osteoporosis, which literally means porous bones, is often viewed as an "old person's" disease. However, preventive measures to protect against this disease should start in the 20's when bones are filling with vitamin D and calcium. After age 35, the body's ability to absorb these nutrients greatly decreases.

SOURCES OF CALCIUM

Milk 8oz = 300mg
Cheese (low fat, except cottage) 1oz = 200mg
Oysters 3oz canned = 38mg
Salmon 3oz = 177mg
Sardines 1 can = 351mg
Almonds 1oz = 80mg
Brazil nuts 1oz = 50mg
Dates 5 = 13mg
Peanuts, dry 1oz = 15mg
Pork and beans 1 cup = 133mg
Dried apricots 1 cup = 59mg
Orange juice (calcium fortified)
Broccoli (1/2 cup boiled) = 47mg
Greens such as beet, collard, mustard, turnip 1/2 cup = 76mg
Herring cooked, dry heat 3oz = 63
Ice milk 1/2 cup = 138mg
Kale 1/2 cup = 90mg
Pudding (made with low fat milk)
Soybeans (1/2 cup boiled) = 131mg
Tofu raw, firm 3-1/2oz = 204mg
Yogurt, low fat 400mg
Cranberry sauce canned 1/4 cup = 3mg

It is best to get calcium in your diet through food. Many calcium supplements do not dissolve in the stomach and multivitamins may only supply approximately 25-35% of the RDA for calcium. There are certain drugs that may deplete calcium, but not limited to such as antacids, cholestyramine (lowers blood cholesterol), furosemide (diuretic), anticonvulsant medications, thyroid medications, corticosteroids (taken over long periods), tetracycline (antibiotic), and isoniazid (INH).

Call the Wellness Center for more nutrition information at (618)536-4441.

Student Health Center

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This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

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618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.