

CALCIUM

Frequently Asked Questions

? How much calcium should I take?

A The current NOF (National Osteoporosis Foundation) recommendations for post-menopausal females (or osteoporosis patients) is 1000-1200mg of calcium daily.

? Is too much calcium harmful?

A Yes. Too much calcium can throw your body's natural balance of vitamin D and other hormones off, resulting in actual worsening of bone health.

? What kind of calcium should I take?

A Only two types of supplemental calcium can be used by our bones: Calcium Carbonate and Calcium Citrate.

Calcium Citrate is much more easily absorbed than Calcium Carbonate in general.

People who should AVOID Calcium Carbonate include those with calcium kidney stones, people taking "stomach pills" to treat ulcers or right acid reflux (such as Prilosec, Prevacid, Zantac, Pepcid, or other similar medications.) These medications block the absorption of Calcium Carbonate (but not Calcium Citrate).

Dietary Calcium that comes from natural sources (i.e. cow milk, yogurt) is by far the best for your bones. Foods that are artificially supplemented with calcium are not as helpful and can be dangerous due to the amount of calcium they contain. Examples are Orange Juice, Almond Milk, and Soy Milk. These products are artificially supplemented with high doses of Calcium Carbonate.

? What kind of calcium should I take?

A Some foods that are naturally high in calcium content include:

Cow Milk	300mg/cup (regardless of whether it is fat free, skim, etc.)
Yogurt	400mg/cup (this varies greatly between brands/types of yogurt)
Cheese	150mg = one cheese stick
Cottage Cheese	200mg/cup

Orange Juice/Soy/Almond Milk are artificially fortified with Calcium Carbonate or other types of calcium (i.e. Calcium Tri Phosphate). These products generally can be purchased without the additional calcium.

Other supplements include Tums, Rolaids, Herbal Supplements, etc.

It is recommended that patients get as much calcium as possible from natural dietary calcium sources such as milk, yogurt, and cheese. You can then supplement as necessary with calcium (preferably calcium citrate) to reach the required 1000-1200mg/day of calcium.

? How do I read food/supplement labels to calculate total calcium amounts?

A Labels contain a list of the “percent daily value” of calcium. This value is calculated as a percent of 1000mg.

Pay close attention to the service size on the label.

For example, one cup of cow milk contains 30% of the “percent daily value” which translates to 300mg in each serving.

Additional Notes About Calcium Citrate

Calcium Citrate (pills) generally are available in the following doses (again, pay close attention to serving size):

315mg/pill (Maximum)
250mg
200mg (Petites)

! *UpCal D powdered Calcium Citrate contains 500mg/scoop (available at Walmart or on Amazon.com)*

The brand Citracal now makes many products with Calcium Carbonate (i.e. gummies, pearls, sustained release formulations) so it is important to check the ingredient label. The types of calcium in the pill will be listed in the ingredient list.

! *Do not take more than 600mg of calcium at one time*

! *Do not take calcium with caffeinated beverages*

Calculating Your Daily Calcium Intake

You must include all significant sources of calcium in your calculations. This includes multi-vitamins, calcium pills, Tums/Roloids, and other supplements. You should also include the natural dietary calcium you take daily.

Calcium Pills (each pill contains)	_____mg
Cow Milk	300mg per cup
Yogurt	400mg per cup (plain yogurt)
Cheese	150mg per cheese stick for example
Multivitamin	_____mg
Orange Juice (with calcium)	350mg per cup
Almond/Soy Milk (with calcium)	450mg per cup
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Total Daily Calcium:	_____mg