

Calcium For Bone Health

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

As regular readers know, my mission is teaching you about all things orthopaedic. Bones and joints are the most obvious, but sometimes we need to get even more basic. I feel it is really important for you to know more about Calcium.

Do you really know Calcium? #20 on the Periodic Table of the Elements, an Alkaline Earth Metal if there are any chemists in the audience!

As far as your bones are concerned, Calcium is No.1. In fact, bones love Calcium. Calcium not only is responsible for bone strength, but is important in how nerves and muscles function and is required for blood clotting.

Bones Bank Calcium

Calcium builds bone density and keep bones strong. Bones act like a bank to store up calcium. But Calcium doesn't just stay in the bones. It circulates throughout your body, too. When our bodies don't get enough Calcium on a regular basis, your blood will pull Calcium from your bones.

A blood test can measure calcium levels, but it is kind of deceiving because your body pulls calcium from your bones leaving your bones depleted and osteoporotic.

How much is needed?

Calcium 1000 - 1500mg daily along with 800 international units of Vitamin D.

Foods are Best Source

Aim to get enough Calcium in certain foods in your diet. Dairy products - milk, cheese, yogurt. Fortified products - cereal, bread, orange juice. Calcium from foods is best because you get other components important for bone health; vitamins C and K, phosphorus - bones love this stuff.

Supplements

Calcium carbonate or Calcium citrate. Carbonate requires a healthy digestive system with enough stomach acid to absorb it. It may cause

bloating and constipation. We recommend Calcium citrate (Citracal) which is more easily digested and doesn't cause constipation or gas. Check the label for elemental Calcium, which refers to the amount of Calcium that's available for absorption by your body. Do not take more than 500mg at one time. Don't rely on multivitamins with Calcium as the usually don't provide enough Calcium to meet daily requirements.

Calcium Trivia

Calcium is about 2% of your body weight.

As you age your body is less efficient in absorbing the Calcium it needs from the gut.

Calcium is needed for transmission of electrical impulses that control muscles and heartbeat.

Too much Calcium can lead to kidney stones.

Eight ounce glass of milk = 300mg Calcium.

The End

Food is your best source of this important bone builder, but supplements if chosen wisely - can increase your Calcium level as well. Healthy bones also depend on -

- weight bearing exercise such as walking
- Limit alcohol intake
- Avoid too much caffeine, salt
- Don't smoke

Everything in moderation is always a good rule.

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan.

Please call 989-463-6092 for information or to schedule an appointment.

Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinic dates are July 16 and July 31, 2009.

Please don't forget there is a wealth of accurate information about all the Orthopaedic conditions I treat on the office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com. Please log on and check it out.

We are happy to answer questions from readers. You can e-mail me at orthopodsurgeon@hotmail.com or write to me at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan 48801.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush