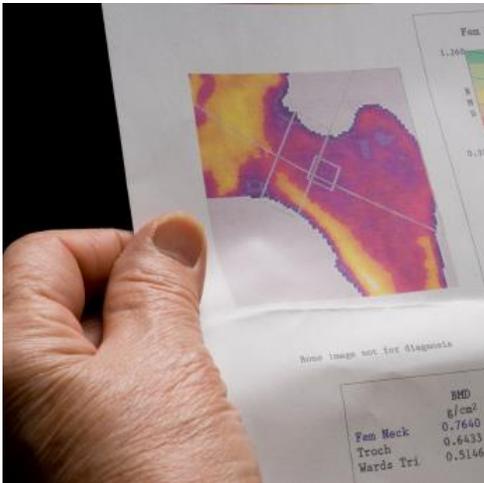


# Calcium Controversy: Think Again Before You Take Another Calcium Tablet

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When a woman loses bone mass density over time, does not make enough bone, or a combination of the two, she is usually diagnosed with a disease called osteoporosis. Approximately 10% of women in the United States are diagnosed with this disease and there is a wealth of information available for preventing and treating it. But sometimes the recommended steps for preventing it are misleading and can actually be detrimental to a woman's overall health.

A common recommendation by doctors to help prevent osteoporosis is to supplement a lack of dietary calcium with calcium supplements. This advice has been disputed and dis-proven by numerous studies that are beginning to surface.

The relationship between taking calcium tablets and lowering osteoporosis is inconclusive based on evidence that women in the U.S. are taking high levels of calcium supplements yet the rates of osteoporosis found in this same population continues to be high. Another alarming fact about calcium tablets is that the risk of taking them seems to outweigh the risk of osteoporosis in many cases.

A major problem with the information about osteoporosis is that women are often told at a relatively young age that they need to increase the amount of calcium they take in order to prevent future bone loss. This advice predicates women's bones at an early age as the ideal baseline compared to the bones of an aging woman where there is bound to be some natural deterioration of her bones. This perpetuates a cycle of taking calcium supplements to build bones, which in turn has created more sickness and problems coming from the supplements.

## The Problem With Calcium Supplements

The reason that calcium supplements are often recommended as a measure to prevent osteoporosis lies in the fact that bones are made up of calcium. Yet, the first problem with most calcium supplements is that they are made up of elemental calcium which includes limestone, bone meal, and shells. Calcium carbonate, one type of calcium tablet found on many drug store shelves, comprises rocks and shells. This is not the type of calcium that helps strengthen our bones. The human body is not able to metabolize elemental calcium in a nourishing way because it lacks the other components that the body needs to absorb and to allocate the calcium.

Calcium tablets that are not absorbed properly can be very damaging to your body. The specific function of the body to absorb calcium is dependent upon having other vitamins and nutrients that work reciprocally with it by utilizing and distributing it in the right areas.

Two of the key vitamins that are crucial to the absorption of calcium are vitamin K2 and vitamin D. Consuming large amounts of supplemental calcium tablets alone does not give the body all the components to use the calcium appropriately.

When taking supplements, a person gets the isolated version of calcium (most likely in the elemental form) and if her body is lacking in the aforementioned vitamins, the calcium may not be absorbed in the correct way. Without the whole package, there's a great chance the calcium will be distributed in her blood and not in her bones. A risk of having too much calcium being distributed inappropriately is having calcium build-up in different areas other than the bones, which can lead to dangerous consequences.

The build-up of calcium (especially elemental calcium) may lead to chronic health problems such as kidney stones, constipation, or hypercalcemia. Kidney stones may result from calcium building up and having to be pushed through the kidneys while constipation can happen if too much underutilized calcium builds up in the bowels.

Hypercalcemia is when too much calcium builds up in the blood stream and can cause blood clot formations, high blood pressure, and in some cases, heart attack. Calcium deposits can also collect in breast tissue and may lead to malignant breast cancer. There's evidence of women who have supplemented with calcium tablets over long periods of time that have greater bone density but also have a 300% higher cases of breast cancer. These are all conditions that are caused by too much, inefficiently utilized calcium in the body.

Another issue with excessive supplementation of calcium tablets is the fact that iron and zinc are not absorbed when there is too much calcium in the body. These two minerals also help with rebuilding strong bones. This means that taking calcium tablets may interfere with normal amounts of bone formation in someone who could otherwise have healthy bones.

## Healthier Alternative Sources of Calcium

Once you understand why calcium supplements are not the best option for maintaining and strengthening your bones, it's important to understand the role that calcium does play in the body. Calcium has been touted as an all-important mineral for strong bones, nails, and teeth, which is true to a certain extent. In order for calcium to be utilized in the best way in the body, it needs to work synergistically with vitamin K2 and vitamin D, as previously mentioned. Another factor mentioned earlier is that there should not be too much calcium, or the body will have problems absorbing other key minerals for healthy bones.

Human bones get stronger from calcium found in food. This makes sense considering that we eat food, rather than rocks or shells. Food nourishes our bodies and we obtain most of the nutrients we need from food. When a woman gets the calcium needed from her diet, the food she eats will contain most of the nutrients required to distribute and utilize the calcium where her body needs it the most.

Therefore, if we want to have strong bones and prevent excessive bone loss, then we will need to maintain a diet that allows our body to utilize nutrients in the correct ways. This can be done by knowing the foods that have the vitamins and minerals that we need and how to maximize their benefits by consuming them together.

There are many foods that are marketed as being "calcium-rich" but advertisements found in the media can be profoundly misleading. The most common foods that we are told to have lots of calcium are commercial dairy products. Yet, the process of pasteurization destroys much of the calcium that would otherwise be in dairy. They may also be fortified with supplemental calcium, which is commonly done with many processed foods these days. So, instead of drinking lots of pasteurized milk for your calcium needs, you may want to look for other foods that are natural sources of calcium.

**Almonds and sesame seeds**, as well as other nuts and seeds, contain high amounts of calcium. Green leafy vegetables, such as kale, mustard greens, and dandelion greens are high in calcium too.

It is also important to consider that dairy foods are naturally high in calcium when they are not subjected to high heat pasteurization. Therefore, if you have good sources of milk, cheese, and butter that are not pasteurized at high temperatures, then you should definitely consume these products to get your calcium. They also have vitamin K2 which is crucial for the absorption of calcium, as mentioned before.

Also, **fermented foods** can be cultured with a starter that contains vitamin K2, in order to increase the amount of the vitamin, which is one of many reasons we should consume fermented foods for optimal health and wellness.

In addition to vitamin K2, magnesium and vitamin D are important for the absorption and distribution of calcium in our bodies. Sea vegetables are a great source of magnesium. Supplementing with magnesium citrate is a good idea if you are not eating enough foods high in magnesium.

Vitamin D has become a very popular vitamin in the mainstream health world because it is a necessary vitamin for the body to utilize calcium, but it is important to remember the optimal ways to achieve good levels. Again, all of these vitamins and minerals work together to build healthy bones and teeth. Therefore, we should strive to obtain all of them in healthy amounts through our diet and lifestyle.

Similar to calcium tablets, another example of superfluous supplements that are often touted by mainstream health gurus as being important to health is the mega dosage of vitamin D. Research shows that vitamin D levels do not have to be as high as once believed in order for people to have healthy bones and bodies and if too high it might be dangerous.

**Getting the adequate 10-20 minutes of sun exposure** without wearing sunscreen is very beneficial to having normal levels of vitamin D. When a person has levels of vitamin D that are too high, they may have levels of vitamin K2 which are too low. This may increase the absorption of calcium in the soft tissues, which contributes to all of the problems associated with calcium not getting absorbed into the right places. This is all just more evidence that getting the vitamins and minerals we need from our diet and lifestyle is the way to go.

So, if you want to build and maintain strong bones, consider what you eat before you consider taking calcium tablets. You may also want to partake in some healthy activities that can help keep your bones strong. Walking and other forms of exercising can help keep your bones healthy.

Also, avoiding fractures from falls is a key to keeping your bones healthy as you age. A great way to keep agility in your body and prevent unnecessary falls is to practice balancing. Many common exercises such as yoga include a balancing component. Strength training is also an excellent way to keep bones healthy and strong. A combination of these components will help prevent osteoporosis much more safely and efficiently than any number of calcium supplements found at the drug store.