

[IMAGE]

Why You Need a Calcium Supplement

By Julie T. Chen, MD

We take for granted that every little function our body does requires nutrients, or what I call, fundamental building block tools, for it to occur efficiently. One of those essential components is calcium. It is an essential mineral in our body that is required for normal muscle functioning as well as for all our organs to perform normally. Without it, our muscles hurt and are weak, our heart can't pump regularly and our blood pressure might even be elevated or off.

So, what foods have calcium and why might someone be deficient? And when it does, what are the symptoms we see with calcium deficiency?

Calcium is found in many foods such as dairy, enriched whole grains, and dark green leafy vegetables, just to name a few sources. As we get older, though, we naturally absorb less of what we are eating so we are at higher risk for nutrient deficiency. So the most common reason for calcium deficiency are either from not getting enough in your diet or your hormonal system that regulates calcium is not working right. If your calcium is always low, you should have your doctor check on your parathyroid hormone level and make sure that it is working fine. If it is not, you will need to see a hormone specialist, the endocrinologist.

When we are calcium deficient, the organs in our body cannot functionally optimally and some adverse reactions can occur. Some of the common symptoms of calcium deficiency can be bone or muscle pain, muscle cramps, irregular heart beat or arrhythmias, blood pressure disregulation, increased bruising or bleeding, nerve pain or dysfunction, and poor appetite.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms or if you are suspicious that you may be deficient in calcium, you should see your doctor immediately for testing of your levels of calcium and parathyroid hormone.

In general, I recommend about 500-1200mg per day of calcium supplementation depending on the person's size, age, and risk factors for osteoporosis, hypertension, heart disease, and muscle or nerve pain issues. Because every person's body is different and we all have different diets and lifestyles, it would be very important to check with your doctor first before you start your calcium and ask him or her what the appropriate dosage is for you.

While I always tell my patients in my clinic of integrative medicine in San Jose CA that I am a big proponent of always getting your nutrients through your foods first, I am well aware that some of us need supplementation to get the amount of what we need. So, my recommendation is to eat as much as you can of calcium-rich foods...but when in doubt, ask your doctor to check your levels and to help you pick out the right dosage of calcium supplementation for you.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=1755&no_paginate=true&no_b=true