

CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D

CALCIUM

What types of calcium are there?

Calcium Citrate: most easily absorbed. No gas or constipation. Safest for individuals prone to kidney stones.

Calcium Carbonate: take with a meal. If you have gas or constipation, increase fluids and activity or switch formulas.

Calcium Phosphate: well absorbed. Typically, no gas or constipation.

You can take calcium that has magnesium included if you have constipation. If you have significant issues with loose stool, however, you may want to choose a calcium supplement that does not contain magnesium since magnesium is a natural laxative.

How much calcium do I need each day?

Recommended amounts will vary depending on age, gender and medical history. They typically range between 1000-1500mg/day. Ask your doctor or dietitian what amount is best for you.

You should first try to reach your calcium goal with food sources and then make up the difference with a calcium supplement. Multivitamins also have varying amounts of calcium.

How/when should I take it?

The body can only absorb 500-600 mg of calcium at a time, so split your doses throughout the day.

Calcium can have a natural sedative effect on the body so you may benefit from taking your calcium supplements later in the day and in the evening.

Calcium decreases the absorption of iron and zinc, as well as thyroid medication and some antibiotics. Take them at least 2 hours apart.

Talk to your doctor...

... if you experience any side effects such as constipation and dark stools

...before starting a calcium supplement if you take prescription medication or antacids containing aluminum.

...if after taking calcium, you experience kidney disease, constipation, colitis, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, stomach or intestinal bleeding, slow or irregular heartbeat, heart problems, poor digestion, headaches or confusion

Avoid:

Taking > 2500 mg/ day of calcium from diet and/ or supplements unless supervised by your doctor.

Taking calcium supplements that contain bone meal, dolomite, or oyster shell (may contain toxic substances).

Taking calcium if you have a high blood calcium level, or sarcoidosis.

Note: If you have allergies or food sensitivities, read the label carefully to avoid unwanted ingredients.

VITAMIN D

Getting enough vitamin D has many health benefits. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, influences many hormones, may help prevent infection and helps reduce inflammation. New research shows that it also may provide protection from high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and cancer.

Where do we get vitamin D?

Foods that contain vitamin D are limited. You can get vitamin D from sun exposure, but not in the winter months (Oct-April) in New England and other areas experiencing colder climates. Supplementation is the best way to ensure you get enough vitamin D.

How much should I take?

In general, vitamin D3 supplement recommendations are 800-1000 IU/day but everyone has different needs. Vitamin D is measured in international units (IU). Amounts vary between 400 – 2000IU in multivitamin/mineral supplements.

Ask your doctor to check your blood levels (25 OHD) of vitamin D. You are aiming for about 35ng/mL (this vitamin D level goal may vary based on practitioner). If your serum vitamin D level is too low, your doctor may give you therapeutic dosing (50,000 IU/ week for 6-8 weeks or longer). After finishing your therapeutic dose, ask your doctor to recheck your vitamin D (25 OHD) level.

Don't forget...

Be sure to look for supplements labeled gluten-free as some of these companies make products that are not gluten-free.

Caution: Some vitamin and mineral supplements contain lactose, soy, fructose and other ingredients that may cause gastrointestinal discomfort in some people. If you have allergies or food sensitivities, read the label carefully to avoid unwanted ingredients.

Bayer Healthcare (Citracal): 866-511-9328 (as listed on glutenfreedrugs.com)

Blue Bonnet: 281-240-3332

Carlson Labs: 800-323-4141

Country Life: 800-645-5768

Freeda Vitamins: 800-777-3737

Kirkman Labs: 800-245-8282

NatureMade: 800-276-2878

Solgar: 877-SOLGAR

These supplement companies are available to patients through their provider.

Douglas Labs: 412- 494-0122; www.douglaslabs.com

Integrative Therapeutics: 800-931-1709; www.integrativeinc.com

Pure Encapsulations: 800-753-2277; www.pureencapsulations.com

Vital Nutrients: 888-328-9992; www.vitalnutrients.net

Metagenics: 800-638-2848; www.metagenics.com