

Health Topics

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WHICH CALCIUM FOR OSTEOPOROSIS ?

- Q. I have osteoporosis and am taking Tums as a calcium supplement. I want to do everything possible to help my situation. Is there anything else I can take to help?
- A. There has been a lot of talk about osteoporosis and rightly so. Osteoporosis is a serious condition characterized by the gradual loss of bone. It is a paradox that in this country we are the best informed about this disease, we produce the largest amount of calcium for human consumption in the world, we consume large amounts of dairy products and yet osteoporosis is still a major problem. Regardless, most Americans do not get the necessary nutrients their bodies need to prevent osteoporosis.

Everyone is at risk for osteoporosis, all races, both male and female. People at heightened risk include (but are not limited to): men and women over 50, women who have had hysterectomies, women who exercise heavily, women with a family history of osteoporosis, recently pregnant and nursing mothers, people with thin small frames, those who consume soft drinks and caffeine, smokers, heavy alcohol drinkers, anyone with a sedentary life style, and people that use medications such as anti-ulcer medications, steroids, and anti-inflammatories.

Your bone structure is an active living tissue that is continuously being dissolved and rebuilt. Exercise, along with a diet rich in calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, copper and manganese is critical for building and maintaining healthy bone. You see, bone is much more than just calcium.

Not all calcium supplements are created equal. Most people take products containing calcium carbonate (OsCal ®, Tums ®). These products are poorly absorbed and carry a risk of kidney stones, gas, bloating, and constipation. Calcium citrate is well absorbed but still must be combined with other bone building components. MCHC (microcrystalline hydroxyapatite calcium) is a whole bone extract from bovine sources. It contains the necessary ingredients that comprise bone. There is information that suggests MCHC can reverse osteoporosis.

The bottom line here is to not take just a calcium product alone but find a product that also provides all the nutrients to support good bone health. Early supplementation is important as early as the teenage years. Practice reasonable weight bearing exercise, and avoid soft drinks as they contain phosphates that deplete calcium.

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