

## VITAMIN D AND CALCIUM

# What women need at menopause and after

STAR HEALTH DESK

It is commonly recommended that women — especially as they get older — should take calcium and vitamin D supplements to help strengthen bones and protect against future fractures. However, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recently concluded that there is not enough proof that taking these supplements before or after menopause prevents fractures in women who never had fractures before. Further, taking too much calcium may put people at risk of heart disease and kidney stone. So what should you do?

Here is some useful information about calcium and vitamin D for midlife and older women.

### Vitamin D

Unlike other vitamins, vitamin D can be made by the body. Your skin manufactures it when exposed to sunlight. Vitamin D helps absorb calcium into the bloodstream, so that the calcium can help build bone. Vitamin D also helps strengthen muscles and the immune system and helps reduce inflammation.

**How much you need:** If you are regularly exposed to sunlight even for a short amount of time (as little as 15–30 minutes twice a week), you might have



enough vitamin D. However, as you age, your body may be less efficient at making vitamin D; also, many women avoid sun exposure to protect against skin cancer and wrinkling. The recommended daily amount of vitamin D is: 600 International Units (IU) for women younger than 70 and 800 IU for women 70 and older.

**How much is too much:** Very high doses of vitamin D can increase calcium levels in the blood, causing kidney and heart damage. Unlike many other vitamins, D can build up in the body over time. Some ongoing studies are looking at exactly how much vitamin D is too much;

for now, it is recommended that you not use supplements over 4000 IU for an extended period. If you are taking several different dietary supplements, check the labels on all of them to be sure you are not overdoing it. Don't worry about getting too much vitamin D from sun exposure or foods; that is not likely to happen.

**How to get it:** Vitamin D occurs naturally in very few foods: egg yolks, oily fish, and beef liver. Some foods are fortified with vitamin D: milk and other dairy products, cereals and grains, orange juice. If you can't get enough vitamin D from sunshine and your diet, talk to a doctor about supplements.

### Calcium

Calcium makes up most of your bones and teeth. It also plays a role in clotting blood and helping nerves, muscles, and the heart to work properly.

**How much you need:** The recommended daily amount of calcium: 1000 mg for women 50 and younger and 1200 mg for women older than 50.

**How much is too much:** Taking too much calcium from supplements can cause kidney stones and heart disease. However, getting too much calcium from diet does not pose these health problems.

**How to get it:** Calcium is found in many foods, such as dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese), some fish, calcium-fortified juices, and some dark green vegetables. If you do not get enough dietary calcium, consult a doctor for a supplement that is usually available in combination with Vit D.

**Bottom line:** We should try to get Vit D and calcium from dietary or natural sources rather than supplements. Women specially older group should always consult with a doctor about the need and dose of supplement as taking large amounts of these calcium supplement may put them at increased risk of heart disease and death.

Source: Journal watch

## NEW DIET SUGGESTION



### Eggs regain reputation

**Except people with diabetes, eating up to an egg a day does not increase the risk of heart disease or stroke-large review**

Egg yolks are high in cholesterol, but a new analysis adds to the evidence that they are not the dietary sin we once thought they were. The review study published in the journal BMJ suggests that for most people, eating one egg a day is not bad for the heart.

To date, the majority of prospective studies have found no significant association between egg consumption and risk of coronary heart disease or stroke. Researchers reviewed eight prospective studies including 263,938 subjects and pooled the data for analysis. They found no evidence that eating up to an egg a day increased the risk of heart disease or stroke. The results were the same for men and women and in all age ranges.

Diabetic patients were the only exception. For them, high egg consumption was associated with an increased risk of heart disease; but a reduced risk for hemorrhagic stroke.

Source: The New York Times

HEALTH

bulletin

Open windows, reduce risk for preterm birth

Opening the windows at home may help pregnant women reduce their risk for preterm birth or low birth weight, a new study published in the American Journal of Public Health indicates. Researchers suggested the increase in fresh air could help protect expectant mothers from exposure to secondhand smoke and other volatile organic compounds that can be found indoors.

Twins don't need C-sections!

Obstetricians increasingly recommend planned Caesarean sections for women having twins. But a Canadian study recently presented has found that a C-section for healthy twins usually provides no advantage over vaginal delivery.

Easing from Sciatica

Sciatica is a condition represented with low back pain combined with a pain through the buttock and down one leg. It occurs when there is any injury or compression of the sciatic nerve, a large nerve that runs from the lower back down the back of each leg.

The nerve controls muscles in the back of your knee and lower leg and provides feeling to the back of your thigh, part of your lower leg and the sole of your foot. You will feel pain, weakness, numbness or tingling sensation in those parts of the body when you have sciatica.

The most common cause of sciatica is a herniated disk. Natural wear and tear of the vertebrae can lead to a narrowing of the spinal canal. This narrowing, called spinal stenosis, may put pressure on the roots of the sciatic nerve and may produce symptoms. In rare cases, sciatica may result from tumors growing inside or along the spinal cord or sciatic nerve, infection or injury to nerve due to fracture.

There are steps you can take at home to ease the pain of sciatica. A heating pad or ice pack may be especially helpful. Although bed rest is not recommended, reduce your activity for the first couple of days. Then, slowly start your usual activities after that. Avoid heavy lifting or twisting of your back for the first 6 weeks after the pain begins. You should start routine exercising again after 2-3 weeks. A physiotherapist can show you how to gently stretch the hamstring and lower back. Depending on your medical condition, certain exercises may not be recommended. Over-the-counter pain relievers can provide short-term relief from sciatica. Injections, surgery may be needed in certain cases.

If you have had sciatica once, there is a chance that it will return. But there are steps you can take to reduce the odds:

- Exercise regularly.
- Maintain good posture.
- Bend at the knees to lift heavy objects.



HEALTH TIPS

Help prevent foot ulcers

Open wounds or ulcers can develop on the feet of people with diabetes, often due to poor blood circulation.

The American Podiatric Medical Association suggests how to help prevent foot ulcers:

- See a medical professional regularly.
- Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol.
- Following your doctor's orders to help control cholesterol and blood glucose levels.
- Wear appropriate shoes and socks.
- Regularly inspect your feet and let your doctor know about any injuries or problems.



/StarHealthBD

Knowing for better living

75% of premature babies can be saved without expensive & high technology care !

Keep the baby warm & clean

Wash hands before touching the baby

Initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth

Prevent infection with proper use of antibiotic

Provide artificial respiration if necessary

Consult with doctor



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