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Women and Calcium

As women, we know that we get calcium from milk and dairy products. Is that all you know?

Too little calcium can increase your risk of developing osteoporosis, causing porous bones that easily fracture. A report in *The Journals of Gerontology, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences*, showed that fractures related to osteoporosis are a burden, not only to our health, but to our economy as well. The estimated cost of fractures in the United States was \$19 billion annually.

Not everyone consumes the calcium needed through diet alone. Calcium intake through supplements can be a good start to strengthening bones, especially over age 50. The National Institute of Health recommends that a daily value for people under 50 is 1,000 mg per day. For those over 50 or who are pregnant or breastfeeding, it is 1,200 mg.

Two common types of supplements are calcium carbonate and calcium citrate. Calcium carbonate is in most antacid tablets. It tastes good and is easy to consume! For best results, one should take it with food. Calcium citrate does not need food to be effective. Talk to your physician about the best supplements and timed daily doses for you, as supplements can also mess with your body's ability to absorb other medications or nutrients. Too much calcium can cause kidney stones or interfere with your heart and brain.

The little-known fact about taking calcium supplements is that our bodies are able to absorb only 500 mg at a time. So taking any supplement with more than that amount all at once is like throwing away money. That extra dose does no good for your body.

Although many people stop at that – supplements - there is so much more to know! For an effective osteoporosis prevention strategy, there are other important steps to take.

It's not just calcium that builds strong bones. Another consideration is that our bodies also need vitamin D to help absorb calcium or it may end up passing right through. Protein also plays a crucial role in building bones, and it should be a consideration in healthy diets.

A crucial step in an effective osteoporosis prevention plan that women often overlook is resistance exercise. By resistance exercise, I mean load bearing jogging or jumping, and strength training activities such as pushups, yoga poses that challenge our muscles, and lifting weights. Even if a routine consists of lifting cans of food while watching television, GREAT! Do it! It's better than doing nothing at all.