



Bedford Commons OB-GYN

Calcium and Vitamin D Supplementation

Recommended Daily Intake

	<u>Calcium</u>	<u>Vitamin D</u>
Up to age 18	1300mg	400-800 IU
Age 19-50	1000mg	400-800 IU
Over age 50	1500mg	800-1000 IU
Pregnancy	1000mg	400-800 IU

Sources of Calcium

Food is the best source of calcium, with the highest levels found in dairy products. An average serving of dairy contains about 300mg of calcium. Food labels list calcium as a percentage of daily value (DV), which is based on 1000mg of calcium per day.

For example:

30% of DV equals 300mg

15% of DV equals 150mg

The safe upper limit for total daily calcium intake is 2500mg.

Calcium Supplements

The amount of calcium needed from a supplement depends on how much you obtain from your food. Calcium exists in compounds such as calcium carbonate and calcium citrate. These compounds contain different amounts of elemental calcium, which is the actual amount of calcium in the supplement. When reading labels, be sure to use the elemental calcium amount, and pay attention to the “serving size.” If calcium tablets are hard to swallow, try chewable types such as Tums or Viactiv.

Calcium Absorption

Calcium is best absorbed when taken in amounts of 500-600 mg or less. Taking your calcium all at once, however, is better than not taking it at all. Most supplements should be taken with food for best absorption. If you experience side effects from calcium such as gas or constipation, try another type and start with a smaller dose, adding more calcium each week.

Calcium Interactions

- May reduce the absorption of tetracycline.
- Should not be taken at the same time as iron.
- Thyroid hormones should not be taken within four hours of calcium.
- If you take medications for GERD that block stomach acid, you may absorb calcium citrate better, as it does not need stomach acid for absorption.

Vitamin D

The natural source of vitamin D is through the skin by sun exposure, but this is diminished with sunscreen use and in people over 70. The main source in food is fortified milk, with about 100 IU per 8 ounces. Vitamin D supplements are easily absorbed and do not need to be taken at the same time as calcium. The maximum safe dose of vitamin D is unclear, but excessive vitamin D can increase the risk of kidney stones.