

Calcium Works Harder For You

(NAPSA)—Calcium has been typecast as a bone-builder—a significant role for the mineral, but one that ignores other wide-ranging benefits of this hard working nutrient. Research shows there is much more to calcium than bones alone. This multi-dimensional mineral benefits the whole body.

Weight

Recent studies show that you could lose more weight by adding more calcium to your weight loss plan. Getting enough calcium in your diet seems to trigger the body to burn more fat.

One study of women ages 18 to 31 found that given comparable calorie intakes, those participants who got at least 780 milligrams of calcium a day in their diets maintained their weight over a two-year timeframe, whereas women who averaged less than 780 milligrams of calcium a day gained fat mass. Women who averaged 1,000 milligrams a day had an overall decrease in body weight. Other studies have shown similar results—participants who ate diets higher in calcium and low-fat dairy foods tended to have lower body weights.

Cancer

Calcium has been favorably linked to reducing the risk of breast and colon cancers. Research conducted in animals has shown that high-fat diets, which contain little calcium and vitamin D can cause abnormal changes in mammary glands. These changes may lead to breast cancer. Research suggests getting enough calcium and vitamin D in the diet may decrease changes in breast tissue and reduce the risk of breast cancer in premenopausal women.

Calcium is also thought to be one of several dietary components that may reduce the risk of colon cancer. Researchers think this may be because calcium binds with potentially harmful substances in the colon.

Premenstrual syndrome

Emerging research suggests that calcium may ease several PMS-related symptoms including depression, food cravings, water retention and pain. One study,

which followed nearly 500 women, found that by the third month of consuming 1200 mg of calcium each day, participants had a 48 percent reduction in PMS symptoms compared to a 30 percent reduction in the placebo group.

Blood pressure

Several years ago the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute found that eating a diet filled with fruits and vegetables significantly reduced blood pressure. The news got even better when low-fat dairy foods were added to the mix. Three or more servings a day of low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese, along with plenty of produce doubled the reduction in blood pressure. Calcium was considered at least part of the reason.

The positive connection between calcium and blood pressure was more firmly established when researchers conducted a review of more than 40 studies on the topic. It appears that the benefits were most pronounced in people who had not been getting enough calcium in their diets.

A Great Start Toward Total Nutrition—The potential benefits of calcium come from eating 1,000 to 1,500 milligrams a day. Nutrition surveys show most women and children are not getting anywhere close to that. Calcium fortified cereals along with other calcium-rich foods (see table) can help fill the gap.

Great Sources of Calcium

FOOD

Amount of Calcium (milligrams)

Milk (1 cup)—300

Yogurt (1 cup)—300-350

Orange juice (fortified with calcium – 1 cup)—300-350

Ready-to-eat cereal (fortified with calcium – 1 cup) Total cereal with 100% DV of calcium—0-1000 (check nutrition label)

Cheese (1 ounce)—200

Bread (calcium-fortified—2 slices)—150-300+ (check nutrition label)

Almonds (1/2 cup)—180

