



# Women's Mid-Life Health Centre of Saskatchewan

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## Health Issues



### Choosing a Calcium Supplement

Adding a calcium supplement into your diet helps ensure that you are meeting your daily intake requirements. There are so many different options and formulations of calcium available on the market; choosing the right one may be difficult. Osteoporosis Canada has developed some helpful suggestions on what to look for when choosing a calcium supplement.

#### Amount of Calcium per Dose

- Check the product label to find out how much elemental calcium is in each tablet. Elemental calcium tells you how much calcium is available for your body to absorb.
- Add up the amount of elemental calcium to know if you are meeting your daily requirement.
- Elemental calcium dose is often identified in brackets on a product description label (ex: calcium carbonate 1250 mg; (500 mg of elemental calcium)).

#### Price

- Prices will vary depending on if the supplement is a brand name product; or generic brand.
- Price may also depend on the amount of elemental calcium in the product.
- Remember to shop and compare prices and brands.

#### Tolerance

- Some people who take calcium supplements may experience discomforts such as constipation, upset stomach or nausea.
- Some possible solutions include trying a different brand of calcium supplement or in a different form such as chewable or liquid form, or water dissolving tablets.

#### Safety

- Avoid supplements made from ingredients such as unrefined oyster shell, dolomite, or bone meal. These ingredients have contaminants such as toxic metals and high levels of lead.
- Instead choose calcium formulations such as calcium carbonate, calcium citrate, calcium lactate or calcium gluconate.
- Choose a product that has met specific Canadian or American safety standards regarding lead content, quality, and disintegration.
- The product will be stamped with either the initials D.I.N (Drug Identification Number); or G.P (General Product). American products will have the initials U.S.P (United States Pharmacopoeia) as a safety regulation.

#### Tablet Size

- Calcium supplement tablets can be very large and hard to swallow.
- Some possible solutions include trying liquid, chewable, or dissolving forms of calcium.

#### Things to keep in mind

- 1200 mg of calcium is the recommended daily need of a person age 50 and over.
- Depending on the multi-vitamin tablet it may contain very little calcium!
- Vitamin D helps the body to absorb calcium. It is recommended to take between 800IU-1000IU of vitamin D daily.
- Not all calcium supplements are formulated with added vitamin D; be sure to check the label.

Created by Mia Kubrak for The Women's Midlife Health Centre of Saskatchewan  
Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan  
January 2010

Reference:

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