

# Trying To Lose Weight? Cut Calories, Not Calcium

by Miriam Nelson, PhD

Dr. Miriam Nelson is the author of the “Strong Women” book series

(NAPSA)—With the growing problem of obesity in America, losing weight has become the top priority for many people. As a result, dieters tend to view dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt that are naturally high in fat and in



some cases high in carbohydrates as ones that they need to avoid when trying to lose weight. However, while following fad diets may lead to weight loss, restrictive eating can result in a loss of crucial nutrients, such as calcium, that are important in maintaining good health.

**I'm a woman going through menopause. I don't want to gain weight and I'm willing to diet and exercise—but which diet and what exercises are the best for me?**

To stay in shape, keep eating habits balanced and remain active. To lose weight, include all food groups, but you must reduce overall calories. To do so, reduce processed sugary and fatty foods, while restricting calories and

increasing weight-bearing activities. This combination is the most effective way to lose weight and the best for bone health.

Weight-bearing exercise is vital to keeping bones strong in menopause and beyond. Particularly for young women, exercises such as jumping rope or jogging can help prevent osteoporosis. A study by researchers at the University of Arizona demonstrated that weight-bearing exercises and resistance training performed three times a week combined with daily calcium citrate supplementation (800 mg) not only improved fitness levels but provided significant improvement in bone mineral density (BMD) of postmenopausal women.

**I am lactose intolerant and trying to diet but I am concerned about bone health—what can I do?**

Although you may need to avoid dairy foods because you lack the enzyme to digest them, there are other ways to ensure that you are getting enough calcium, and it is vital to health to include both calcium and vitamin D in your diet every day.

Look for nondairy foods fortified with calcium that you can consume daily. Many are readily available and affordable, such as

orange juice and cereal. It may still be hard to meet the optimum level for calcium, and calcium supplements are an excellent way to close the gap. Supplements containing calcium citrate, such as Citracal®, have the convenient advantage of being highly soluble. They can be taken at any time, with or without meals. Consider taking calcium citrate with vitamin D during the winter months or when daily exposure to sunshine is restricted. Vitamin D helps absorption.

**Can a diet rich in calcium help me lose weight?**

Including calcium as part of a balanced, reduced-calorie diet can be a healthy, effective way to meet your weight loss goal. A recent study conducted by researchers at the University of Tennessee found that adults on a reduced-calorie diet who ate three to four servings of dairy foods each day lost an average of 24 pounds, significantly more than those who also cut calories but consumed few or no dairy foods. The study concluded that dietary calcium might help speed metabolism and aid in weight loss. However, more research is needed to determine whether there is a true connection between calcium and weight loss.

*Mission Pharmacal, the maker of Citracal®, is a family-owned pharmaceutical company based in San Antonio, Tx.*