

# Total Nutrition

## Capture More Calcium

(NAPSA)—It's a given—calcium helps keep bones strong. New studies however, suggest that there is more to this mineral. Calcium may help lower high blood pressure and it may reduce the risk of colon cancer, kidney stones and tooth decay. There is also speculation that calcium has a role in weight management by somehow controlling body fat.

In light of the above, figuring out how to capture more calcium makes sense. Not only is it important to eat foods rich in calcium, it is also worthwhile to do what you can to ensure that calcium is absorbed and used by your body. Several factors can affect that.

**Vitamin D**—Vitamin D is essential for maximum calcium absorption. For adults, the recommended amount to get in a day is 200 International Units (IU), with needs increasing as you get older—400 IU/day for people over age 51 and 600 IU/day for those over 70.

For most Americans, the primary source of vitamin D is exposure to sunlight. Depending on the environment and one's skin pigment, the needed exposure can be anywhere from several minutes to a few hours, with light-skinned people needing less sun time (10 to 15 minutes) than dark-skinned people. A daily dose of sunlight is not necessary as the body can store vitamin D then release it as it is needed.

Several factors reduce the sun's contribution to vitamin D status such as sunscreens, protective clothing, long winter months and pollution. Foods help fill the gap. Though few foods naturally contain vitamin D, fortified milk, yogurts, juices and cereals can be good sources supplying 10 percent or more of what you need in a day. Physician-sanctioned supplements are another option too.

**Medications**—Some medications, including certain arthritis drugs and antibiotics, can inter-

fere with calcium absorption. Check with your pharmacist about potential interactions—then inquire about how best to time your meals and medications for maximum calcium absorption.

**Caffeine, Sodium and Protein**—Each of these substances can reduce calcium absorption or increase calcium losses if eaten in excess. But, if consumed in healthful portions, their impact is minimal. For example, drinking one cup of coffee results in a calcium loss of just four to six milligrams. Unless you drink copious amounts of coffee, calcium loss is fairly insignificant. The same holds true with sodium. A study of postmenopausal women found that for each 500 milligrams of sodium consumed, calcium losses increased by 10 milligrams. An extra tablespoon or two of milk can easily cover the losses.

**Alcohol**—Consuming too much alcohol can reduce calcium absorption and can damage the liver. Because the liver is involved in the production of vitamin D, damage to it can also cut into calcium absorption.

**A Great Start Toward Total Nutrition**—Capture calcium by choosing four calcium-rich foods a day including dairy products and calcium-fortified juices, cereals, or breads.

Brought to you by Total cereals, whole grain breakfast cereals with 100 percent of the daily value of at least 11 vitamins and minerals, including calcium.

### Other factors that can reduce calcium absorption and utilization:

*Smoking (may decrease calcium absorption)*

*Age (calcium absorption generally decreases with age)*

*Estrogen (decreasing levels can reduce calcium absorption)*

