



# Calcium & Vitamin D Supplements: A Helpful Guide

## CALCIUM SUPPLEMENTS

### Do you need a calcium supplement?

First, it's important to know how much calcium you're currently getting a day. It's usually best to try getting all your recommended calcium from food. (As a reminder, that's 1,200 mg for women age 51 and older and men age 71 and older, and 1,000 mg for men age 70 and younger and women age 50 and younger.)

If you get enough calcium from food, you do not need a supplement. There is no benefit to taking more calcium than you need, and it may even carry some risks. However, supplements can help make up the difference between what you get daily from food and your recommended amount.

Talk to your doctor to see if a calcium supplement is right for you.

### Choosing a calcium supplement:

Select brand-name supplements with proven reliability, or labels with the USP (United States Pharmacopeia) Verified Mark.

Pay attention to the amount of "elemental calcium" in the supplement as well as the amount per serving and serving size.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist which calcium supplement is right for you.

### Taking a calcium supplement:

- Take most calcium supplements with food to help it absorb better.
- When starting or switching to a new supplement, start with small amounts to help your body better tolerate it.

- Take in amounts of 500–600 mg or less.
- Side effects such as gas or constipation may occur. Drinking more water can help or try switching to another supplement brand.

## VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTS

### Do you need a vitamin D supplement?

Talk to your doctor to see if a vitamin D supplement is right for you. Getting enough from food or sunlight alone can be very challenging, and many people rely on supplements to help reach their recommended daily amount.

People under the age of 50 should get 400–800 international units (IU) of vitamin D daily, and those age 50 and older should get 800–1,000 IU daily. Some people need more vitamin D; according to the Institute of Medicine, the safe upper limit of vitamin D is 4,000 IU per day for most adults.

### Choosing a vitamin D supplement:

Vitamin D supplements include vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol). Many calcium supplements and multivitamins include vitamin D3.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist which Vitamin D supplement is right for you.

### Taking a vitamin D supplement:

- Vitamin D supplements can be taken with or without food.
- The full amount can be taken at one time.
- Vitamin D does not need to be taken at the same time as a calcium supplement.

**Talk with your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you need help choosing a supplement, and about possible interactions between prescription or over-the-counter medications and calcium or vitamin D supplements.**