

## ***Calcium and Cardiovascular Problems***

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In 2005, I wrote a lengthy article entitled, ***What You Really Need to Know About Calcium***, and a companion-piece entitled, ***What You Really Need to Know about Magnesium***. In the calcium article, I exposed several lies and fraudulent claims made about the "accepted wisdom" that is promulgated by calcium purveyors about their calcium supplements, especially for women, e.g. how much, what kind, organic vs inorganic, calcium and osteoporosis, etc. The magnesium article was similarly revealing. In those articles, I noted that many researchers were concerned that the dramatic rise in cardiovascular problems among women might be the direct result of "overdosing" on bad calcium products, and under-dosing on magnesium. If you've never read that article, YOU SHOULD! You can visit the **Featured Health Articles** section, and look for those two articles. You'll learn the truth about calcium and magnesium and your body. I'm safe in saying that 98% of the commercial calcium/magnesium products run from **ineffective to totally useless, and even dangerous**. The following independent article refers to new research that speaks to the cardiovascular concern to which I referred in that 2005 article. For the "rest of the story," please take the time to read the 2005 calcium/magnesium articles. This is important to your health. *Lyle*

### **Bottom Line**

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### **Calcium Supplements Can Increase Cardiovascular Risk**

I recently came across a new study about calcium supplements that seems to challenge the accepted wisdom that all older women should take calcium for bone health. Scientists in New Zealand found that increased heart disease risks may outweigh the positive effects on bone in healthy postmenopausal women who took Citracal calcium supplements. Their research was published in the February 2, 2008, issue

of the British Medical Journal.

### **CALCIUM AND HEART ATTACKS**

At the University of Auckland, researchers examined the effects of calcium supplementation on 1,471 healthy postmenopausal women (mean age 74). They gave 732 women a daily 1,000 milligram (mg) elemental calcium supplement (**the amount of calcium in a supplement that's available for your body to absorb**), while 739 took a placebo. After five years, researchers found that heart attacks were more common in the group that took calcium -- the women who took the calcium supplements experienced 50% more heart attacks than the women who took a placebo. The New Zealand scientists speculated that because calcium supplements raise blood calcium levels, they might also increase the risk of *vascular calcification* that raises the risk of heart attack. The final answer is still far from clear. Most likely there are different "correct" answers for different people.

### **Weigh Risks and Benefits**

According to Dr. Suzanne R Steinbaum, DO, a cardiologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, "*Older women who have multiple risk factors for heart disease or who have coronary artery disease already, taking high doses of calcium may add to their cardiovascular risk.*" You may need to forego calcium supplements altogether or take a dose lower than the standard 1,200 to 1,500 mg per day recommendation for postmenopausal women at risk for osteoporosis. It's very important to weigh the risks and benefits of supplementation depending on your personal profile.

It's often feasible to get all the calcium you need through dietary sources, which include green leafy vegetables such as bok choy, kale, collards and turnip greens, as well as broccoli. For older women who have a personal or family history of fragile bones and fracture -- and no history of heart disease -- the benefits of taking a calcium supplement might well outweigh the risks. If you have evidence of osteoporosis or have a strong family history of osteoporosis, a bone density test should be performed. If you have no risk factors or clinical evidence of heart disease, then you might want to consider calcium to reduce risk of bone breaks -- in addition to weight-bearing exercises, which should become an integral part of your lifestyle.

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