



Doctor in the Kitchen®

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HOW WE USE CALCIUM

How our bodies use calcium is a fascinating topic. At one time we assumed that the adult skeleton was full grown and did not need new calcium from our diet to sustain itself. Then, some years ago, we discovered through research that bone is constantly in a process of exchange—of giving up some of its calcium and taking in new calcium.

When we learned this, we knew that bone is body tissue, dependent upon nutrients in our daily meals as a source of material for rejuvenation.

Precise Knowledge

The subject of calcium becomes even more interesting when one realizes how precise is our knowledge. For example, calcium and phosphorus (present in milk, incidentally, in ideal ratio) travel to bone via our blood stream. At the bone, tiny crystals of these minerals deposit themselves around a framework of protein.

As a bone grows or sustains itself, new bone material deposits itself on the outside of the bone. But at the same time, bone material on the inside of the bone shaft is absorbed into our blood stream by the body for other functions. When calcium in the blood stream drops below a certain level mechanisms are triggered to take calcium from the bone. So, our bones need new calcium regularly from our food.

Another fascinating aspect of bone is confirmed by research—that bone strengthens itself in relation to the stress put on it. For instance, when astronauts experience weightlessness for any

length of time, they lose calcium from their bones. This also happens to people who by reason of illness experience extensive bed rest.

As a physician I must wonder if one of the reason older people suffer less bone strength may be due in part to their putting less stress on their systems. We know that many older people have problems such as osteoporosis (bone thinning) due to inadequate intakes of calcium in their daily meals.

I recommend that they start getting at least two 8-ounce glasses of milk per day, or its equivalent in other dairy foods such as cheese. This will give them about three-fourths of the Recommended Dietary Allowance for calcium. Two 8-ounce glasses of fluid whole milk and one ounce of cheddar cheese will give you 782 mg of those 800 mg of calcium that are recommended for an adult each day.

Calcium Comparisons

If you think this isn't good advice, just look at these amounts of other foods you would have to eat if you were to get enough calcium without milk or milk products:

Canned salmon (with bones) is a good source of calcium. Still, it would take almost 2½ cups to equal two glasses of milk. Dry beans are a good source, too. But to get enough calcium you'd need almost 6 cups daily. Or 38 slices of enriched bread, or 30 eggs, or 16 oranges, or 13 cups of squash. It gets ridiculous. You need milk.

NUTRITION A LA CARTE

• Calories measure how much energy the food we eat will give us. Thus, a calorie is not, in itself, a nutrient. But since you need energy you need calories, but not too many. If you are fat it means you are storing too much future energy, or that you are lugging around energy in the form of fat that you'll never use.

• Do you live alone and find cooking for one a problem? There are ways to get more variety in your meals. Take ground beef. You don't have to use it all on successive days. Wrap ground beef into separate small portions and store in your freezer. Meat loaf or spaghetti sauce doesn't have to be eaten all at once.

• Adults, too, could improve their snacks. The typical morning coffee break is a case in point. And for some people, it's not just a break, but their breakfast and a poor one at that. Coffee break snacks would be improved if they included items such as cheese wedges, oranges, fruit juices, milk, cottage cheese with fruit, or ready-to-eat cereals.

• How far back in history is butter mentioned? Well, butter dates back as far as recorded history and undoubtedly beyond. There's a Biblical reference in Genesis, Chapter 18, the 8th verse—about Abraham providing butter as part of a meal. It seems that all through the ages, people have loved butter and regarded it as one of the great delicacies.

• Everybody talks about losing weight. But some people need to gain weight. How can they do it? Under-weight people should eat more, and more often! They should eat more of the foods that furnish more calories in small bulk—meat, eggs, sweets, chocolate, fats, and oils. Ask your doctor about physical activity and more rest.

• People ask me so here's my answer: There is a difference between chocolate milk and chocolate dairy drink. Chocolate milk is made from whole milk and chocolate dairy drink is made from skim or partially skim milk. Otherwise, the two milk drinks are made with similar ingredients.

• From the simple one-celled plant to highly complex human beings, all living things need

food. Food is necessary to support growth, to repair tissues, which constantly are wearing out, and to supply energy for physical activity. If your meals do not furnish all the elements you need your body will not operate at peak efficiency for very long.

Third in Lineup
The greatest baseball hitters of all time have generally been third in their team's batting order, such as Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Rogers Hornsby, Eddie Collins and George Sisler.

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