

Consuming Thoughts

by

Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension
Home Economist for
Berks Co.



Too Much Calcium?

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Someone asked if they could get too much calcium by taking supplements and eating foods rich in calcium.

Generally, nutritionists don't talk much about too much calcium because the real problem is people don't get enough of it.

Still, you make a good point. If

you take calcium supplements, and then get calcium from other foods, you could get too much of a good thing. That can cause kidney stones or calcium deposits in the joints.

The National Academy of Sciences recommends no more than 2,500 milligrams a day to prevent calcium build-ups. Still, get-

ting enough calcium is important, especially during adolescence when bones are growing the fastest. That's why the minimum recommended amount of calcium for anyone 9 to 18 years old is 1,300 milligrams a day. People 19 to 50 years should get 1,000 milligrams a day, and those over 50 should get 1,200 milligrams.

If you're worried about too much calcium, examine your usual diet and do the math. Let's say you drink one 8-ounce glass of milk (about 300 milligrams of calcium) a day. You usually put a 1-ounce slice of American cheese (about 175 milligrams) on your sandwich made with whole-wheat bread (20 milligrams each slice), and your lunch bag usually contains a cup of fruit-flavored, low-fat yogurt (about 300 milligrams). Broccoli is your favorite vegetable, so it's not unusual to have a half-cup of that with dinner (about 25 milligrams). Add another 50 milligrams for that orange you eat each evening.

Add all of that up, and you have less than 900 milligrams of calcium. Your total intake is probably a bit more — it's not unusual for a 3-ounce portion of meat to contain 10 or 15 milligrams of calcium. Still, a 500-milligram calcium supplement or calcium-fortified juice might not be a bad addition to this particular daily diet.

Local strawberries are being picked daily and the consumer has choices of purchasing them in the supermarkets, roadside stands or pick-your-own operations.

Encouraged by the new food guidelines, depicted in the food pyramid, we are trying to eat more fruits and vegetables. Fruit in season locally has some big advantages in cost, flavor, and accessibility. One cup of strawberries provides 150% of the USRDA of vitamin C. Fresh, frozen or sliced they make just the

right topping for cereal, waffles, pancakes or French toast. Forget the syrup and orange juice for a while.

1. When you go to pick strawberries, select the best variety for freezing by asking the grower. An average of one pound strawberries makes one pint frozen berries.

2. There are several ways to pack fruit for freezing: Syrup pack or dry pack. The syrup can be either sugar syrup or pectin syrup and the dry pack needs to be with sugar. If these products

are not used, the strawberries will change more in color, flavor and texture while in freezer storage, even if the strawberries are frozen quickly.

To make a sugar syrup pack, mix and dissolve 2½ cups sugar in four cups cold water. Stir well to dissolve. Add one cup of this syrup per quart of prepared fruit.

To make no sugar pectin syrup pack, combine one package powdered pectin in one-cup water. Heat to boiling and boil 1 minute. Remove from heat and add 1¼ cups of water. Chill be-

fore using. Add more water if thinner syrup is desired. Submerge fruit in syrup.

To make individually quick frozen (IQF) berries use a tray pack: Dip berries into either one of the syrup pack solutions, drain and place berries individually, not touching, on plastic wrap on a cookie tray. Freeze in coldest part of freezer (usually 1 hour), then package the individually frozen berries in freezer bags.

To make a dry pack, mix ½-cup dry sugar per quart of prepared fruit.

To package: Fill pint or quart size freezer bags to within one inch of top, squeeze out air easily by dunking bag in water, being careful not to get any water into bag, seal, label and freeze. Before freezing, bags may be inserted into reusable rigid plastic freezer containers for added protection against punctures and leakage.

For additional food preservation information, contact your local Cooperative Extension office.

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