

North Shore Gynecology

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Calcium and Vitamin D supplementation

Calcium is an essential supplement important for bone health, as well as proper muscle function including the heart muscle. Calcium is also essential for normal blood vessel, nerve, enzyme and joint function as well. There are two main types of calcium. Calcium citrate is the best absorbed calcium. It may contain less elemental calcium but is usually supplied in smaller tablets, thus easier to swallow. Calcium carbonate contains the most amount of elemental calcium, and is easier on the stomach, but may come in large tablets which may be harder to swallow. Calcium from oyster shell or bone meal may contain heavy metals which can be dangerous. Coral calcium, contrary to some reports, does not contain more elemental calcium than calcium carbonate, and may be more expensive. When taking Calcium supplements, it is important to remember that there is only minimal absorption beyond 500mg at one time. Because of this, do not take more than 500mg of Calcium at one time. If further supplementation is needed, wait at least 3-4 hours between dosing.

The **recommended daily calcium** amount for supplementation, which can be obtained with either food or supplements or more commonly a combination of both, is **1000mg daily**.

Vitamin D is essential for calcium absorption and bone health. Evidence suggests Vitamin D may help prevent certain cancers such as breast, colon, and certain skin cancers. Sub-adequate Vitamin D levels can lead to fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and depression. Vitamin D supplements are readily available at any pharmacy; over the counter supplements come in the form of Vitamin D3. Over 50% of women are Vitamin D deficient, and more so in the winter time. New evidence of the benefits of Vitamin D warrants higher recommendations than previously thought. Some physicians will order a Vitamin D level on patients if they are having any symptoms of Vitamin D deficiency, and if the level is very low, a prescription in the form of Vitamin D2 can be given weekly for several weeks before switching over to the over the counter Vitamin D3 form. Most patients that have Vitamin D deficiency have no symptoms.

Daily recommendations for Vitamin D is between **2000-3000 iu daily**.

ESTIMATING YOUR DAILY CALCIUM INTAKE

Add up your daily calcium: For example, if you drink 3 glasses (8oz) of milk per day, that is 302mg x 3 =906mg. Then add 250mg to account for additional calcium to meet recommended dose.