

Americans facing a calcium crises

Many Americans think the little tablespoon of cream in the coffee or the slice of cheese on the cheeseburger provide enough calcium for the day. Not so, says the Dairy and Nutrition Council.

The nation is in a calcium crisis and it has health professionals worried.

A coalition of nutrition experts, who sponsored a calcium summit blamed a drop in milk consumption on the increased popularity of soft drinks, especially among children. A 1998 study by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that milk purchases in schools declined by 29 percent while fruit juice consumption increased by 31 percent, fruit drinks by 181 percent and carbonated beverages by 1103 percent.



In addition, a USDA study found that teens, particularly girls, were less likely to drink milk. Nine out of 10 teenage girls and seven out of 10 teenage boys are not meeting their dietary calcium requirements.

Adolescents who gulped down 26 ounces or more of soft drinks a day were four times more likely to drink less than a cup of milk a day, according to one study.

“This is particularly disturbing given that, by about age 18, most of the body’s skeletal mass/density is accumulated,” stated a council report.

The statistics are not much better for adults. Calcium intake continues to steadily decline after age 19.

Even though men consume more calcium than women do, they still fall short of the daily-recommended amount. Actually, adults need to consume more calcium than children do. Only calcium, deemed a “supernutrient,” can help to reduce the risk of osteoporosis, hypertension, colon cancer and other diseases that face aging adults.

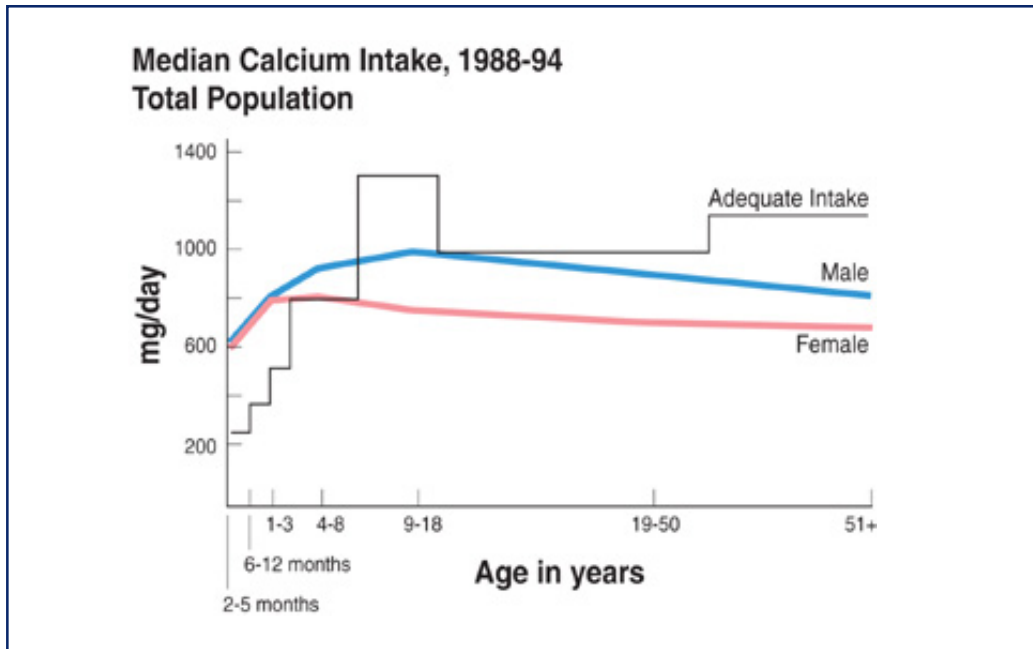
Fort Wayne orthopaedic surgeon Philip G. Hershberger, M.D., encourages supplements in addition to a diet rich in calcium. “I always felt that patients were not getting enough calcium. Diet apparently is not enough,” he said.

Besides milk, calcium is found in:

- yogurt
- cheese
- green leafy vegetables
- tofu
- shellfish
- crustaceans
- some nuts

Changing dietary habits will help build stronger bones and healthier bodies. The USDA recommends a minimum of two to three servings of dairy products a day.

As you sit down to lunch or dinner today, calculate the calcium in your meal. You may decide a nice cold glass of milk would be a great addition to that meal.



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322 Canal Walk, Indianapolis, IN 26202-3268 • (317) 261-2060 • Fax: (317) 261-2076 • www.ismanet.org