

# Completely You

The guide to looking good and feeling great

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**DAILY TIP** Live in a cool climate? You may not get enough D from the sun and may need a supplement, esp. if you use sunscreen <http://bit.ly/A1C06J> **CALENDAR** »



Need to Know

## Should You Take Calcium Supplements?

### Self Checkup

Do you double-dip at summer parties?

- A. All the time
- B. Never!
- C. Only if I'm with my family or close friends

By: Brette Sember

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Even the experts are confused: On the one hand, calcium helps keep your bones strong. On the other, calcium supplements have been shown to build up the plaque that can clog your arteries, making you more prone to heart attacks, especially if you're a women over 50. So should women take extra calcium or not -- and how much do they need anyway?

The answer, say doctors: It depends.

**First, the facts on calcium:** Everybody needs calcium -- the National Institutes of Health (NIH) recommends that all adults get 1000 mg per day, with 1200 mg recommended for women over age 50. In fact, calcium may have other benefits besides its bone-building abilities. Dr. Richard Kelley, author of *The Fitness Response* who practices in Austin, Texas, also says that boosting the calcium intake in your diet can help you fight fat.

In addition to calcium, your body needs vitamin D so it can absorb the calcium. That's why the NIH recommends 600 IU of vitamin D daily for most people.

Most people still get their calcium from foods -- dairy, especially, but even green leafy vegetables, sardines and fortified OJ. But according to the NIH, most adults don't get enough calcium in their diet. That's why doctors used to recommended supplements as a matter of course -- until now.

## Q&A

**I floss before I brush, but my husband flosses afterward. Who's right?**

[Get the answer »](#)



## Poll

**How much does your weight fluctuate in a year?**

- A. 0-5 pounds
- B. 6-10 pounds
- C. More than 11 pounds

-

**The bottom line on supplements:** Discuss your situation with your doctor. Dr. Dana S. Simpler, an internist in Baltimore, says that she now looks at each patient individually and takes into account that person's risk of osteoporosis and heart disease. If she decides supplements are the way to go, she recommends the person take 600 mg. Dr. Kelley does the same. If a lab test shows that a patient's deficient in calcium and has no risk or family history of heart disease, he recommends they take 400 to 800 mg a day.

So if your doctor recommends supplements for you, remember these tips: Stick to small doses (500 mg or less) several times throughout the day with food, and don't forget the vitamin D!

Do *you* take calcium supplements?



The longer your to-do list, the more important it is to give yourself a little TLC. Here's how.



Will Un-Friending Your Ex Help You Heal?



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**Brette Sember**

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[Sheryl](#) · 119 weeks ago

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Thanks for this clarification. Health recommendations can get so confusing.

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[Irene](#) · 119 weeks ago

0

I had been taking calcium supplements until...I read conflicted research. Even with the input of a doctor, it's still a tough decision.

Reply



[jboursaw](#) 32p · 119 weeks ago

+1

I never know on this stuff, but do eat a lot of dairy and cheese stuffs.

Reply

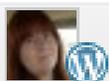


[ruth pennebaker](#) · 119 weeks ago

0

You just reminded me that I need to go to the drugstore and refill my calcium supply.

Reply



[j.boursaw](#)

32p

· 118 weeks ago

+1



I don't take calcium, but have been wondering since I'm, um, of a certain age now. I do eat a lot of dairy products, though.

Reply



[jeanine barone](#)

· 117 weeks ago

0



The link between calcium supplements and heart disease really is a non-link. There's no conclusive evidence that the calcium you ingest ends up in your arteries as a calcification. But there's plenty of evidence that a diet deficient in calcium leads to osteoporosis. Most people find it hard to get enough calcium from diet alone.

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