

## **Adventist Healthcare: Health Tip of the Week**

### Calcium

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 90 percent of adult women, 80 percent of teenage girls and 73 percent of adult men don't get enough calcium in their diets.

What is calcium?

- \* Calcium is essential for the formation and maintenance of healthy teeth and bones. 99 percent of calcium is stored in your bones and teeth. The remaining one percent is in your blood and soft tissues.
- \* Calcium is also involved in blood coagulation, transmission of nerve impulses and normal heartbeat. Muscle contraction and relaxation, stimulation of hormone secretion and activation of enzyme reactions also require small amounts of calcium.
- \* Calcium eases pre-menstrual syndrome. According to the largest study on PMS, women who took calcium had a 50 percent drop in mood swings, pain, water retention and food cravings.
- \* Doctors also suspect a link between low calcium levels and high blood pressure. Calcium has been found to reduce the risk of stroke.
- \* Two major studies have found that calcium can reduce the growth of colon polyps, from which an estimated 90 percent of colon cancers develop.
- \* Calcium prevents gum disease and osteoporosis.

What is the recommended calcium intake?

- \* According to the CDC, males/females:

9-18 years old	1300 (mg) per day
19-50 years old	1000 (mg) per day
51-70 years old	1200 (mg) per day

What foods contain calcium?

- \* Low-fat dairy products such as cheese and milk
- \* Dark green vegetables such as broccoli and spinach
- \* Sardines, salmon (canned with their soft bones) and shrimp
- \* Beans, tofu and almonds
- \* Calcium-fortified foods such as cereals and orange juice
- \* There are several kinds of calcium supplements. Some should be avoided because they may contain toxic lead. These include supplements made from bone meal, dolomite or oyster shells.

How can I protect the calcium in my body?

- \* It is important to get enough vitamin D and phosphorous to help absorb calcium.
- \* Don't smoke. It decreases calcium absorption.

- \* Avoid alcohol. It can increase calcium loss.
- \* Limit caffeine intake. It can decrease calcium absorption.
- \* Increase your intake of calcium-rich foods when under stress.

Sources: CDC, NIH, Newsweek, calciuminfo.com, and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. The Health Tip of the Week is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.