

# Natural Health Tips

## Calcium and its Absorption

Last month I wrote about the link between calcium and magnesium, the important role magnesium plays in getting the calcium to be where we want it – in our bones - and about natural foods that are good magnesium sources.

Now let's talk about good calcium sources in our diet. Most often we are told we need to drink a few cups of milk every day to get enough calcium. This misconception is based on the fact that milk and its products are rich in calcium. But this factor alone does not directly influence how strong our bones will get. The mechanism is more complex than that. For instance, milk is also high in protein and phosphorus and these two “drive the calcium” away – they cause calcium extraction from the bone into the blood and then its excretion through urine. We also know already that milk products do not contain magnesium – lowering even further the chances of calcium storage in the bones.

It's amazing to see how Nature took care of it for us and designed it all in a wondrous way. The foods that are good magnesium sources turn out to be the very foods that also have good contents of calcium AND the calcium in them is much better absorbed by the body.

One serving of milk (one cup) contains a huge 300 mg of calcium, but only 32% of that can be absorbed resulting in 96 mg of efficient, bio-available (absorbable) mineral.

One serving of boiled broccoli (one cup) contains 178 mg of calcium, but due to its higher absorption rate (53%) it will actually provide the same amount (94 mg) of calcium to our bones.

One serving of boiled turnip greens (one cup) contains 198 mg of calcium, having an absorption rate of 52%, thus providing 103 mg of usable calcium – more than the cup of milk.

One cup of cooked quinoa provides 102 mg of calcium, one cup of okra provides 96 mg and one tablespoon of sesame paste\* (tahini) provides an amazing 123 mg of bio-available calcium.

Here you can find a detailed table of calcium rich foods and their bioavailability:

<http://www.moondragon.org/nutrition/calciumtable.html>

Lastly, in order to keep our bones strong and healthy we also need:

- Regular exercise
- Enough outdoor activity (skin exposure to sunlight is the only natural and reliable way to generate vitamin D in your body)
- Avoiding of the “calcium enemies” (see Nutritional Tip of December 2008)

\* From un-hulled sesame seeds. One tablespoon of the raw paste yields cca 3 tablespoons of prepared tahini.