

Natural Health Tips

Calcium and Magnesium

Calcium is the main mineral in our body, constituting more than 10% of our bone mass and about 1.5% of our total body weight. In addition, calcium has a few other vital functions, its level in the blood being crucial for proper muscle contraction (including the heart) and coagulation.

But mostly when we hear the word calcium we think of our bones... osteoporosis... osteopenia etc.

A fact people are less familiar with is that without the proper amount of magnesium, the calcium mineral will not be assimilated by our bones, even when available in the body. Even worse, it may instead be deposited in the soft tissues, causing various problems, among them kidney stones and aortic calcifications.

Magnesium is available in many natural foods: nuts, seeds, whole unrefined grains, green vegetables and beans. But it is not available in dairy foods, and actually a high-protein diet will increase elimination of magnesium (and calcium) through the urine.

Many of us are so strict on consumption of dairy foods, for their high calcium contents, without realizing that our bodies are depleted of magnesium and the high protein in milk and cheese will only aggravate this depletion.

Our ancestors had many magnesium-rich foods in their diets and little or no access to dairy products.

Today we do the opposite and we suffer from an osteoporosis “epidemic”.

So make sure to include green vegetables, whole grains (brown rice, quinoa, buckwheat), beans or tofu and one or two servings of nuts or seeds in your diet.

Also, if you’re taking a calcium supplement, make sure it also has magnesium in it.

A good calcium to magnesium ratio in a supplement is approximately 2 to 1.

Read March 2009 nutritional tip for good sources of calcium in our diet and for more calcium absorption tips.