

Fairhaven Health Addresses Controversy Over Calcium Supplementation

A controversial study released this year claimed that calcium supplementation may be linked to a greater risk of heart attack. As it turns out, an overwhelming amount of scientific research supports its many benefits with most medical practitioners continuing to recognize the importance calcium supplementation plays in women's health, particularly during pregnancy and while nursing.

Bellingham, Washington ([PRWEB](#)) August 30, 2012 -- Earlier this year, a controversial study conducted by German and Swiss researchers claimed that calcium supplementation may be linked to a greater risk of heart attack (see Heart 2012;98:920-925 doi:10.1136/heartjnl-2011-301345).

While these results made for some alarming headlines, such "Calcium Pills Linked to Heart Attack Risk," many medical professionals question the legitimacy of the study. Participants were required to self-report food and supplement intake based on memory, a notoriously unreliable method of collecting data. Further, based on national averages, calcium use was significantly under-reported among study participants, causing the researchers themselves to concede that "it is possible that the unreported calcium supplementation would affect the accuracy of our results."

Unfortunately, these controversial results were widely disseminated and may have caused consumers to be concerned about the potential risks associated with the calcium supplements they take. But, rarely do headlines tell the whole story, and as it turns out, the weight of the scientific evidence clearly favors ensuring sufficient calcium intake from a combination of food and supplements. At least 10 million Americans, mostly women, suffer from osteoporosis, and a large body of scientific evidence shows that high calcium intake can help prevent the bone loss that causes this crippling disease.

Women are susceptible to bone loss throughout their adult life, and a variety of factors can cause the loss of bone mass, including low estrogen levels, lack of calcium intake, vitamin D deficiency, and a sedentary lifestyle. But, as Dr. Amos Grunebaum, the Director of Obstetrics and Chief of Labor and Delivery at one of the nation's top university medical centers points out, "A woman is also susceptible to bone loss during pregnancy and lactation, as her nutrient stores are continually tapped to ensure the growing baby receives proper nourishment." As a result, Dr. Grunebaum adds, "Calcium supplementation is recommended, particularly for women during these important life stages."

Bone health is just one of the reasons that calcium supplementation is important for pregnant women. Dr. Grunebaum comments, "The studies published on calcium supplementation during pregnancy are clear. Calcium supplementation during pregnancy reduces the serious disease preeclampsia, which is a major cause of maternal mortality around the world. In addition, there is evidence that it has a positive effect on the growth of the fetus." Dr. Grunebaum continues, "Up to 10% of pregnant women suffer from preeclampsia, which is characterized by high blood pressure and fluid retention, typically in the later stages of pregnancy. Reducing this disease is crucial when it comes to improving pregnancy outcome."

A study published in the July 19, 2006 issue of the prestigious Cochrane Database System Review reviewed the effects of calcium on pregnancy and concluded that "Calcium supplementation appears to almost halve the risk of preeclampsia." Another meta-analysis study just published in August of 2012 in the Journal of Maternal Fetal and Neonatal Medicine concluded: "The results of our meta-analysis demonstrate that the additional

intake of calcium during pregnancy is an effective measure to reduce the incidence of preeclampsia." And a Norwegian study published in the European Journal of Obstetrics Gynecology Reproductive Biology in July of 2012 concluded, "Calcium deficiency is associated with preeclampsia and intra-uterine growth restriction. Supplementation may reduce both the risk of low birth weight and the severity of preeclampsia."

Because the role of calcium in supporting a healthy pregnancy is clear, Dr. Grunebaum warns that "controversial study results must always be evaluated carefully" and "women should continue to be encouraged to ensure sufficient calcium intake from both food and supplements." Below, is a list of five things trying-to-conceive, pregnant or breastfeeding women need to know about their calcium intake:

- 1) Pregnancy and breastfeeding can deplete a woman's nutrient stores. Adequate intake of calcium is especially important during pregnancy and breastfeeding, unique times in a woman's life when her own nutritional stores are constantly tapped to ensure that her growing child is properly nourished.
- 2) Experts recommend taking no more than 500 milligrams of supplemental calcium at one time. Some researchers have theorized that calcium supplements cause a spike in blood calcium levels, and extra calcium circulating in the bloodstream can attach itself to plaque in the walls of the arteries, ultimately leading to hardening of the arteries. By limiting the supplemental dose to 500 milligrams, it removes any chance that the supplemental calcium will end up in the walls of arteries, where it is not needed or wanted.
- 3) Calcium does not work alone. To work effectively, calcium needs both magnesium and Vitamin D - magnesium helps transport calcium into the bones and Vitamin D enhances calcium absorption. It is important that women choose a calcium supplement that also contains magnesium and Vitamin D to obtain maximum support.
- 4) Consider the form of calcium in the supplement. Supplemental calcium comes in a variety of forms. While calcium carbonate is the most common supplemental form, calcium citrate is thought have better absorption rates. It is recommended to choose a supplement that contains a combination of calcium carbonate and calcium citrate, and calcium supplements should always be taken with food.
- 5) Include calcium-rich foods in the diet, such as low-fat dairy products (milk and yogurt) and green-leafy vegetables. The healthiest choice is always to obtain vitamins and minerals from a variety of food sources, and to supplement when necessary.

Dr. Grunebaum recently helped formulate the [PregnancyPlus Cal-Mag](#) dietary supplement which meets all of the criteria described above. Designed to provide the optimal supplemental dose of calcium and magnesium for trying-to-conceive, pregnant and nursing women, this product provides a daily dose of 500 mg of calcium and 200 mg of magnesium. It contains a combination of calcium carbonate, calcium citrate, and Vitamin D, to ensure optimal absorption of calcium. PregnancyPlus Cal-Mag is manufactured by [Fairhaven Health](#), a leading provider of natural products to support fertility, pregnancy, and nursing health.

About Dr. Amos Grunebaum

[Dr. Amos Grunebaum](#) is double board certified in obstetrics/gynecology and maternal-fetal medicine (high-risk pregnancy). He is recognized as one of New York's foremost Ob/GYNs as evidenced by his regular inclusion in Castle Connolly's "Top Doctors: New York." Dr. Grunebaum is the former director of WebMD's Fertility Center and is one of the Internet's leading authorities on fertility and pregnancy. Over his 30+ years as



OB/GYN in New York, Dr. Grunebaum has delivered more than 3,000 babies and has supervised more than 10,000 deliveries.



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