

## Expert Panel Confirms Calcium Supplement Safety in Relation to CVD

Individuals who do not obtain recommended intake levels of calcium through dietary sources can safely utilize calcium supplements to achieve optimal bone health, concluded an expert panel commissioned by the CRN Foundation, the educational non-profit affiliate of the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN). These findings appear in the November online edition of *Advances in Nutrition*, a journal that highlights the significance of recent research in nutrition and illustrates the central role of nutrition in the promotion of health and prevention of disease.

Responding to questions raised last year about a possible link between calcium supplements and a potential increased risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), an expert panel composed of academic and industry experts in the fields of nutrition, cardiology, epidemiology, bone health and integrative medicine convened on November 10 and 11, 2011 in Washington, D.C. The panel collected and examined the available body of scientific literature, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and observational data, assessing whether long-term use of calcium supplements could promote the occurrence of strokes, coronary heart disease, heart attacks and other forms of CVD, and cross-referenced these findings with four of the Bradford-Hill criteria for causal interference: strength, consistency, dose-response and biological plausibility. The panel concluded that the available science does not suggest an increased risk for CVD from calcium supplement use.

“There is a strong body of evidence from a variety of rigorous scientific studies reinforcing the benefits of calcium in promoting bone growth and maintenance. After reviewing the entire scope of scientific literature for calcium, we are now more confident than ever in both its health benefits and safety,” said panelist Robert P. Heaney, MD, Osteoporosis Research Center, Creighton University Medical Center. “Consumers can feel confident about the safety of their calcium supplements and should continue taking them with confidence. They should, however, be aware of how much calcium their diets provide, and then supplement accordingly.”

In addition to Dr. Heaney, panel experts included: Stephen Kopecky, MD, Division of Cardiovascular Diseases, Mayo Clinic; Kevin Maki, PhD, Provident-Biofortis; John Hathcock, PhD, former senior vice president of scientific and international affairs with the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN); Douglas MacKay, ND, CRN’s vice president of scientific and regulatory affairs; and Taylor Wallace, PhD, CRN’s senior director of scientific and regulatory affairs.

“In light of our safety findings combined with the well-documented benefits of calcium, we urge physicians to continue recommending calcium supplements to their patients as appropriate, as our review of the scientific literature further reinforces the valuable role of calcium in helping consumers maintain bone health,” said Dr. Kopecky. “Building and maintaining calcium is vital for all age groups—young children to adolescents to adults and the elderly must obtain adequate amounts of calcium, either through diet or supplementation. For those who are unsure if they need to supplement their diets with additional calcium, make sure to discuss your current nutritional picture with your physician.”

Supporting the expert panel's conclusion is the recent "Framingham Study," published online in the November 7 *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* by Elizabeth Samelson, PhD, et al., which also looked at the association of calcium and coronary artery calcification and found that "...calcium intake from diet and supplements appeared to neither increase nor decrease vascular calcification, which is a measure of cardiovascular risk...The use of calcium supplements is important for many older adults to ensure adequate intake for bone health."

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