Calcium Supplementation and Heart Disease

Might calcium supplementation increase the risk of CV disease? Yet another study suggests that it does.

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Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for 23.4% of all mortality. For nearly half a century now, the medical and scientific communities have attributed heart disease to consumption of saturated fats, but heart disease continues to take American lives despite the low-fat/no-fat, er, propaganda.

Recent research now suggests that one possible cause of heart disease may come from a rather unsuspecting source: excessive calcium. In fact, a meta-analysis published in the British Journal of Medicine shows that calcium supplementation actually increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and increases coronary artery calcification by about 22%. Calcified arteries become hardened and inelastic, forcing the heart to work harder to pump blood throughout the body. This often results in

high blood pressure, arrhythmias, and shortness of breath. And because calcium is laying down in the tissues instead of entering the bone matrix, it's common to see osteopenia or osteoporosis in these same patients.

Even worse (as I witnessed first-hand with my father) current standard of care for many heart issues involves the use of anticoagulants like warfarin to reduce the viscosity of the blood, but new studies indicate that warfarin may be exacerbating heart disease.

What's a wise warrior to do?

Vitamin K to the rescue. (And rather than popping more pills, even supplements, smart folks recommend getting vitamins and minerals through the diet whenever possible. They tend to think of nutritional supplements as "a short-term loan," not a permanent solution. And I like that idea.)

High-dose vitamin K2 can improve heart and bone health by carboxylating vitamin K-dependent proteins, osteocalcin and matrix Gla-protein. When activated, these proteins remove calcium from the soft tissues and pull it into the bone matrix, where it belongs. Without a sufficient source of vitamin K2, these

proteins can remain partially or completely uncarboxylated, allowing calcium to deposit in the tissues and arteries.

I would also generously supplement with magnesium (either citrate or glycinate) since those same smart folks I listen do have observed over time that we just can't seem to get enough from our diets alone.

About Mike: Michael Barr, DAOM, studied acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine in Los Angeles and New York and practices in NYC and NJ. He current obsession is Functional Medicine: in a nut shell how everything in the body is interconnected & how just about everything that ails (and directs) you has its origins in your gut. To learn more about Functional Medicine, for questions, or for an invitation to his discounted supplement and herbal medicine dispensary, reach out to him at his new telemedicine platform, Root Resolution Health.
