

New research shows poor calcium comprehension is putting women's health at risk

British women are putting themselves at high risk of premature bone ageing and bone diseases such as osteoporosis new research has found.

The vast majority (98 per cent) of women say they understand the role calcium plays in bone health but worryingly, just one per cent recognise that they should be getting at least 800mg of calcium a day.

Despite osteoporosis affecting half of all women, only seven per cent try to ensure they get enough calcium in their diet. 45 per cent admit the issue of getting enough calcium has not even crossed their mind according to the 'Bone-Age' study of 4,500 British women commissioned by chocolate flavoured calcium chew *ellactiva*.

46 per cent have no idea if bone disease runs in their family, and only six per cent of women in the pre and post menopausal age group take a calcium supplement to boost their dietary intake.

Despite this, 85 per cent of women are concerned about their bone health with one in three women (37 per cent) who would change their lifestyle for healthier bones if they knew what to do.

Signs of poor bone health such as a hump back (68 per cent) and walking with a stoop (38 per cent) were rated higher than grey hair when asked about what visible signs of aging women worry most about.

65 per cent said they do worry about losing their independence in old age following ailments such as hip fractures that can result from bone disease.

Leading nutritionist Fiona Hunter explains, "It is important for women to get enough calcium in their diet in their twenties and thirties whilst they can still 'lay down' new calcium deposits and strengthen their bones. After this time, if not enough calcium is absorbed from the diet alone, the body will naturally take this from the body's existing bone deposits. This can steadily lead to serious bone health problems in later life.

"In addition, it is vital that women boost their calcium intake at key life stages, such as when they are breast feeding and in the approach to (and post) menopause. Many women throughout their lives follow restrictive fad diets, many of which dangerously eliminate dairy products. At these key life stages and if you are on a restrictive diet it is vital that you supplement your calcium intake sufficiently with a product such as *ellactiva* to reduce the risk of developing bone health problems."

Your calcium bone-cycle:

Fiona Hunter explains the key life stages when your body needs a calcium boost:

- **When you are growing - 800-1200mg a day** - Children and teenagers need adequate calcium supply to help build healthy bones and lower the risk of developing osteoporosis in later life
- **When you are breastfeeding - 1200-1500mg a day** - A breastfeeding woman requires the biggest calcium boost, the equivalent of drinking five glasses of milk a day
- **After the age of 30 - 800mg a day** - After our mid 20's we stop 'laying down' new calcium deposits and the calcium needed in our blood and other vital organs is taken from our bone store if there isn't enough in the diet on daily basis
- **Pre menopausal women - 1200-1500mg a day** - Changes in hormone levels mean that women in their 40's and 50's need to boost their calcium intake to delay osteoporosis and help prevent brittle bone disease
- **Post menopausal women - 1200-1500mg a day** - Women who have gone through the menopause are at a higher risk of their bones not properly absorbing enough calcium, even if they include adequate amounts in their diets. When women permanently stop menstruating, their bodies don't produce as much oestrogen which makes it more difficult for the body to get the adequate calcium amounts

Other lifestyle factors that can lead to low calcium levels include:

- **Women following a restrictive diet** - Vegan, lactose intolerant, a celiac or those following a dairy restrictive food plan to lose weight need to make sure they are getting a minimum of 800mg of calcium a day
- **Women who are underweight** - Being underweight is a risk factor for osteoporosis in later life, and the adverse effects of women being too thin in their teens and 20's can cause permanent damage to bone health. Women who have lost enough weight to stop menstruating tend to be at the highest risk of not absorbing enough calcium. This can also occur in athletes who over-exercise and do not retain enough calories. However, this can be reversible so it is vital to boost calcium supplementation and for women to seek professional advice if they are worried they might be underweight
- **If you are on medication** - Certain medications such as steroids boost the body's need for calcium in the blood and a high dose calcium supplement is sometimes required. People on medication should check with their GP whether they are at risk

Get the great taste of chocolate through a calcium chew

Forget traditional chalky calcium tablets, new *ellactiva* chocolate flavoured calcium chews are a delicious way to give your body all the calcium and minerals needed to build and maintain healthy bones. Just two chews will give the recommended daily allowance of calcium and are only 20 calories each.

Traditionally calcium supplements have been bitter pills to swallow, with a third (33 per cent) of women who find them difficult to take or do not like the taste. *ellactiva* is ideal for people who have difficulty swallowing pills; just two *ellactiva* chocolate flavoured chews give the recommended 800mg of calcium a day.

Specially formulated by nutritionists, *ellactiva* is the only calcium supplement in the UK that contains natural milk minerals which are easier for the body to absorb. The chews also contain vitamin D which boosts calcium absorption.

Every packet of *ellactiva* contains 28 chews and costs £4.00. Available from larger Boots stores nationwide. For more information or if you are worried you are not getting enough calcium, visit www.ellactiva.co.uk where you can use the calcium calculator to check the calcium levels of your diet.

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Notes to Editors: Expert interviews, images and product samples available on request

Nutritional information: Serving size: 1 chew, Amount per serving: Calories 20, Total fat 0.6g, Total Carb 2.4, Protein 0.1g Calcium 400mg (50% RDA), Vitamin D 2.5µg (50%RDA)

Ingredients: Glucose Syrup, sugar, vegetable fat, Non fat coco powder, non fat milk powder, glycerine, chocolate flavour, soy lecithin, salt, glycerol monostereate, carrageenan, Bone Health Complex (Calvital 400) Calcium carbonate, Milk Minerals Complex, Vitamin D.