

# THE TRUTH ABOUT TUMS

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The use of Tums as a supplemental source of dietary calcium is being reported by television and magazine advertisements, and even some health practitioners.

Strong bones are dependent upon proper nourishment for 1) keeping the bone cells healthy and active; 2) supplying the variety of important nutritional building blocks needed to form the organic matrix of bone, and 3) supplying the complex of minerals that need to be placed on that organic net making up the finished, hardened component of bone known as hydroxyapatite crystals.

There is no doubt that calcium is essential for healthy bone formation. However, the use of Tums as the source of calcium supplementation is questionable. Some reasons include:

- 1) Tums is calcium carbonate which is an antacid. According to a study published in "The Annals of Internal Medicine", the only subjects who failed to absorb calcium carbonate were those who were found not to secrete sufficient stomach acid for proper digestion. Tums works to neutralize stomach acid therefore reducing or eliminating absorption of calcium.
- 2) With growing use of antacids, such as Tums, in the US (approximately 27% of the adult population consumes them) and the regular consumption of calcium carbonate as an inexpensive calcium source, the risk of a condition called Milk-Alkali Syndrome is increasing.

This syndrome was first identified in 1923 and is characterized by hypercalcemia, alkalosis and renal impairment. It may occur in acute, sub-acute or chronic form. Joint stiffness with calcium deposits have also been observed in this disorder. Milk-Alkali Syndrome develops as a result of ingesting large amount of calcium and absorbable alkali, particularly calcium carbonate.

Since Calcium carbonate has risks associated with it and is also shown to be malabsorbed in patients with low hydrochloric acid levels in the stomach, other forms of calcium supplementation are preferable, such as microcrystalline hydroxyapatite.

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