

# Calcium *blockers*

Food – even “healthy” ones like oats and fruits – can sabotage your body’s absorption of this essential mineral. Find the culprits now.

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ILLUSTRATION BY RAY TICSAY



Eat oatmeal? Good. Drink milk? Good. Have them together for breakfast? Not

so good. While rich in nutrients like iron, oats also contain phytates, compounds that hinder your body’s uptake of calcium from that glass of milk. That’s bad news for women, since we need all the help we can get to strengthen our teeth and bones – women are more prone to osteoporosis than men. Unfortunately, phytates aren’t the only calcium blockers out there.









### The “Clingy”

These compounds bind to calcium and reduce its availability to the body.

#### OXALIC ACID

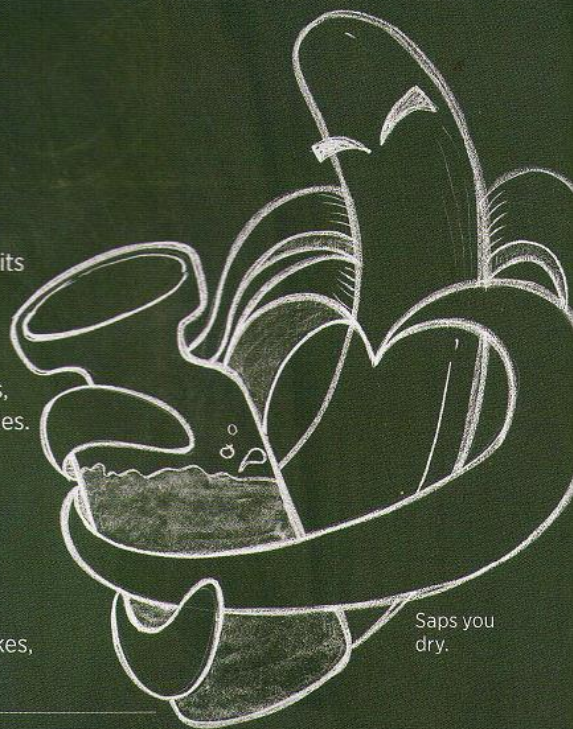
**FOUND IN** Chocolate, leafy greens, beets, beans, bell peppers, and fruits like bananas and oranges.

#### TANNINS

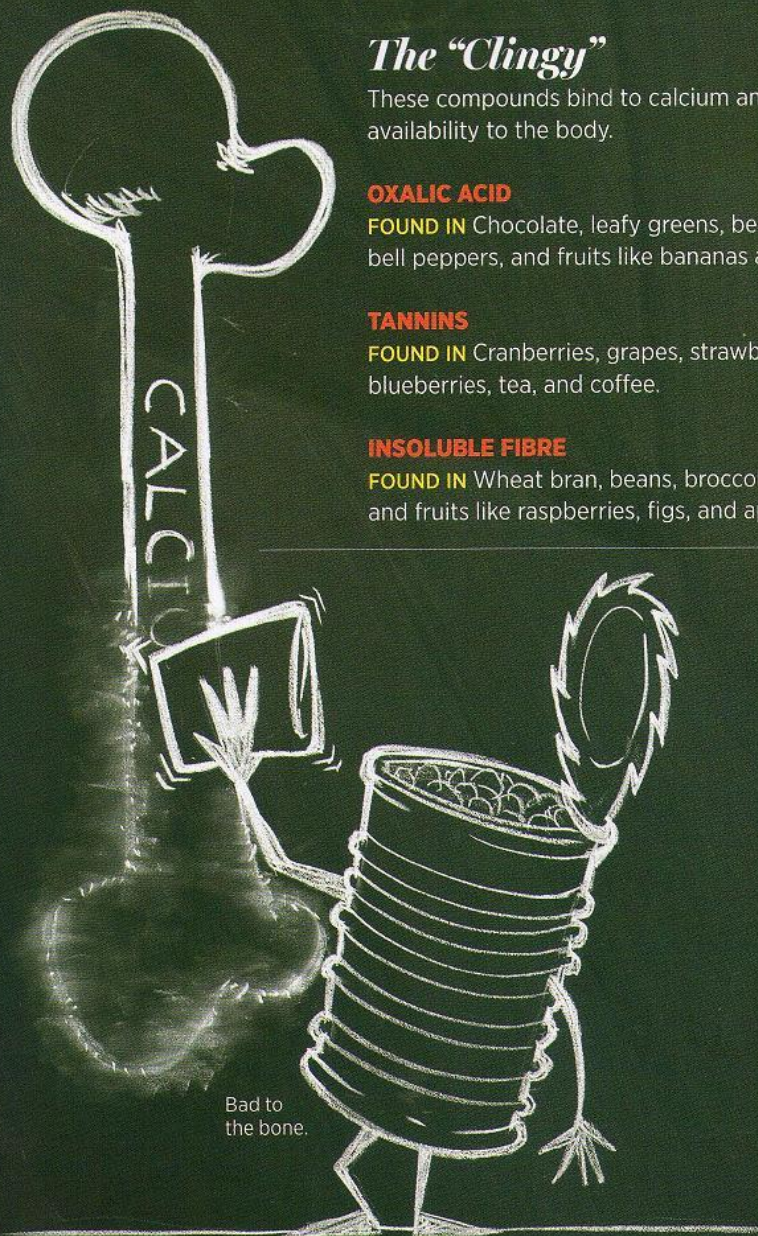
**FOUND IN** Cranberries, grapes, strawberries, blueberries, tea, and coffee.

#### INSOLUBLE FIBRE

**FOUND IN** Wheat bran, beans, broccoli, artichokes, and fruits like raspberries, figs, and apples.



Saps you dry.



Bad to the bone.

### The “Wash Out”

#### SUGAR AND SODIUM

An overly sweet or salty diet causes you to urinate more and pass out calcium along with it.

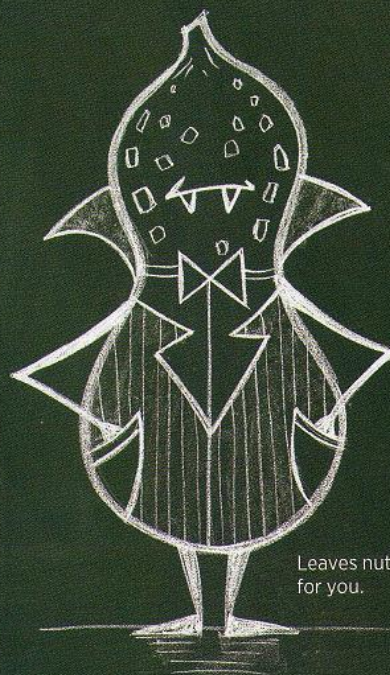
**FOUND IN** Processed, preserved or canned foods, sauces, and snacks.

### The “Sucker”

#### PHOSPHOROUS ACID

Vitamin D is needed to process this acid, thereby reducing the amount available to absorb calcium.

**FOUND IN** Whole grains, sodas, and nuts.



Leaves nut-thing for you.

## EXPERT'S TAKE

There's no escaping calcium-blocking foods, says *Shape* advisory board panellist, Jaclyn Reutens. Unless you're eating excessive amounts of food from these categories, there isn't a need to worry. "If you get your recommended daily 1,000mg intake of calcium, you'll have enough to meet your needs. This figure already factors in the likelihood that you'll be eating the mineral blockers. However, if you're lacking in calcium, you could snack on low-fat yogurt between meals," she suggests.



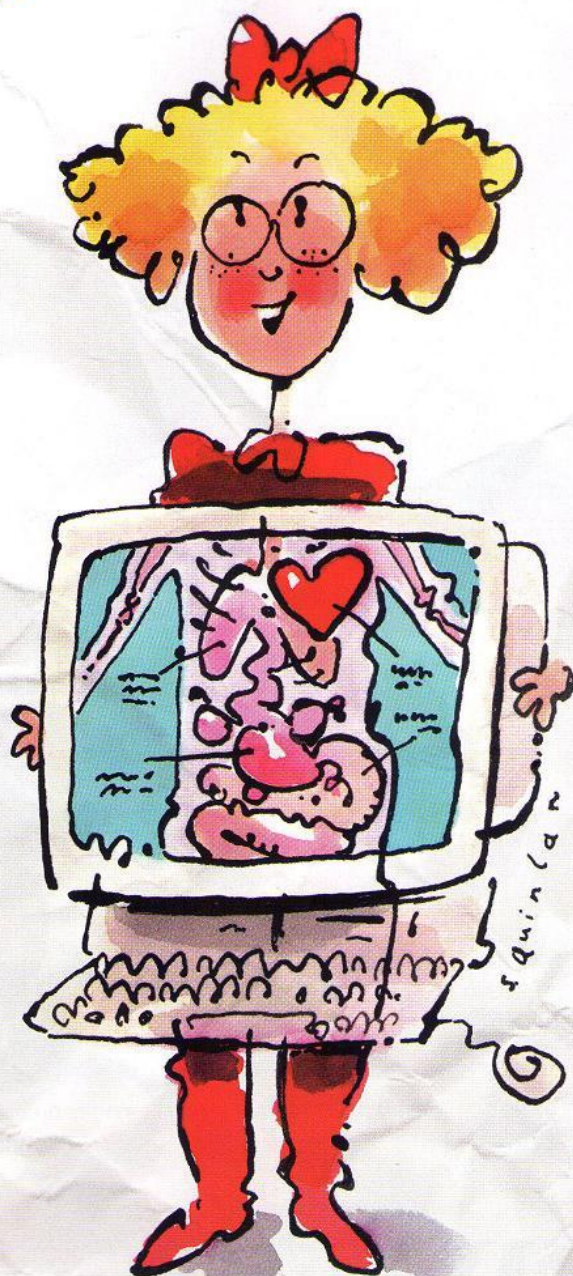


ILLUSTRATION CORBIS

## Multi-purpose Mineral

CALCIUM DOESN'T JUST FORTIFY YOUR FRAME. YOU ALSO NEED IT TO:

- ▶ **Maintain good skin** It promotes cell renewal and keeps your outer barrier healthy.
- ▶ **Keep the nervous system working** It's needed to fire off the electrical charges that send signals to the brain.
- ▶ **Move and pump** The electrical pulses it creates are needed to contract muscles – including the strongest, your heart.
- ▶ **Help blood clot** You'll bleed to death without calcium as it works with vitamin K and fibrinogen, a protein, to help blood coagulate.
- ▶ **Lose weight** When you don't get enough calcium, your brain sends signals to eat more until you get the amount you need.
- ▶ **Prevent colon cancer** Calcium is said to prevent the growth of colon polyps, a precursor to colorectal cancer.
- ▶ **Regulate blood pressure** It does this by controlling the constriction and dilation of blood vessels.
- ▶ **Fight premenstrual syndrome (PMS)** Studies in the US show that getting your recommended daily intake of calcium could reduce pre-period symptoms, such as irritability, bloating and breast tenderness.

## Calcium companions

THESE NUTRIENTS BOOST THE BODY'S UPTAKE OF THE MINERAL.

- **VITAMIN D** Other than sunlight, you can get this vitamin from oily fish, like salmon, as well as fortified milk and cereal.
- **MAGNESIUM** Pumpkin seeds and halibut are rich sources of this mineral.
- **LYSINE** This amino acid is found in red meat and tuna.