



For the week of
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By **Martha Filipic**
(614) 292-9833

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Sharron Coplin, registered dietitian and Ohio State University Extension nutrition associate in the College of Human Ecology.

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**Section of
Communications
and Technology
News & Media Relations**
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

203 Research Services
Building
Wooster, Ohio 44691-4096
(330) 263-3775

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Calcium, kidney stone link complex

Years ago, my father had a kidney stone, and he always warned me against consuming too much calcium as an adult. However, I just heard about a study that says meat and salt are the culprits, not calcium. Is that true?

Actually, for several years researchers have questioned the assumption that there's a link between high calcium diets and the formation of kidney stones. Most kidney stones are formed by either calcium oxalate or calcium phosphate, but increasing evidence reveals that calcium in the diet is not the culprit — even if you've already suffered a kidney stone.

In a recent issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, an Italian study added to the evidence. The study included 120 men who had already had at least one kidney stone. Half were put on a low-calcium diet; half were put on a diet low in salt and extremely low in protein — allowing only three-quarters of an ounce of meat per day. Within five years, 23 men on the low-calcium diet had another kidney stone, compared with only 12 on the low-salt, low-protein diet.

That study adds to information

from a 1997 study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* and conducted by Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Researchers analyzed the diets of nearly 92,000 women ages 34-59 who are participating in the ongoing Nurses' Health Study. Women who consumed more calcium had the lowest incidence of kidney stones. Women with higher sugar and sodium consumption had a higher incidence.

It's important to note that these studies looked at consumption of dairy foods, not calcium pills. If you take calcium supplements, do so during meals.

While researchers continue to study the role of calcium, one thing is known for sure: The more liquid you consume, the less likely you are to suffer from kidney stones. The American Foundation for Urologic Disease suggests drinking as many as 12 large glasses of fluid every day — at least half of which should be water. Doing so helps prevent the urine from being concentrated, reducing the risk of the formation of crystals — what the foundation calls "the building blocks of kidney stones."

Chow Line is a service of The Ohio State University. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.