Dietary calcium should be preferred over supplements, IMA

Young girls increasingly deficient in calcium, which can cause many health issues at a young age

New Delhi, 17 July 2017: According to a recent study, calcium deficiency in women is becoming a prevalent problem in both rural and urban India. This can be blamed on the changing dietary habits, particularly in urban Indians, which has undergone a major change in the last few decades. As per the IMA, people are increasingly relying on processed and packaged foods and consequently, their intake of whole foods has gone down by a major proportion.

About 20% of adolescent girls in the age group of 14 to 17 suffer from calcium deficiency, according to statistics. About 70% of our bone weight is due to calcium phosphate crystals, the reason why calcium is the most important nutrient for good bone health. Women need more calcium than men as they are more prone to bone health problems with age.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, “Our body requires vitamin D to absorb calcium efficiently. In people with vitamin D deficiency, the chances of a calcium deficiency are more even if they their calcium intake is not low. This is because the body is unable to absorb the calcium from your food. Vitamin D is responsible for regulating the amount of calcium in the blood. Sufficient intake of Vitamin D not only helps improve calcium absorption but also helps in decreasing bone loss, lowers the risk of fractures, and helps prevent osteoporosis. Deficiency of calcium can cause many problems such as: issues with blood clotting, blood pressure, and heart rhythm, delayed development in children, and overall weakness and fatigue.”

Young girls have a higher requirement of calcium when compared to older women. Girls in the age group of 9 to 18 require 1300 mg of calcium, while those in the age group of 19 to 50 require 1000 mg of calcium. Those above the age of 50 need 1200 mg.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “Many people resort to calcium supplements sometimes even without consulting a doctor. Supplemental calcium is safe for cardiovascular health if consumed in recommended amounts. However, dietary calcium should be recommended over supplements. Calcium intake over the recommended dietary allowance is not better than intakes that just meet the allowance.”
Here are some ways you can boost your calcium intake naturally.

- Eat foods high in calcium every day.
- Drink low-fat or fat-free milk to boost your calcium consumption without adding too much fat to your diet. Other dairy products that contain calcium are yogurt and cheese; again, choose varieties that are low in fat.
- Eat more leafy greens, especially kale, collard greens and dark green lettuce, and green herbs such as basil, parsley and dill.
- Sardines and salmon are good sources of calcium, as are oats and black, pinto and kidney beans.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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