



Better health for New Zealanders through the development of responsible self-medication

November 26, 2012

MEDIA STATEMENT

Consumers can take calcium supplements with confidence

The New Zealand Self-Medication Industry (NZSMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products said today that consumers can take calcium supplements with confidence following a recent review of the scientific literature.

The review, in the November edition of *Advances in Nutrition*¹, was conducted by a panel of academic and industry experts in the fields of nutrition, cardiology, epidemiology, food science, bone health, and integrative medicine.

After reviewing 16 studies involving more than 358,000 individuals, the panel concluded that there was no connection between calcium intake and heart disease or stroke.

In reaching this conclusion, the panel collected and examined the available scientific literature, including randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and observational data in order to assess whether long-term use of calcium supplements could promote the occurrence of strokes, coronary heart disease, heart attacks and other forms of cardiovascular disease.

SMI executive director, Tim Roper said that the results of the review were reassuring and important news for both consumers and healthcare professionals.

“There have been recent, controversial, articles^{2,3,4} suggesting that there was a link between calcium supplements and the risks of stroke and cardiovascular disease. The publication of this most recent review now provides good evidence that calcium supplements are safe and are not associated with an increased risk of heart disease or stroke.

Mr Roper said that the safety data was in addition to the good evidence that calcium supplements were effective in reducing the risk of fractures and so played a useful role in the treatment of osteoporosis^{5,6}.

Calcium supplementation is a well-tested and widely available option for increasing bone density and reducing the risk of fractures. This is particularly important for those patients

¹ Heaney RP, Kopecky S, Maki KC, Hathcock J, Mackay D, Wallace TC. A review of calcium supplements and cardiovascular disease risk. *Adv Nutr.* Vol. 3:763-771, 2012.

² Bolland MJ, Grey A, Avenell A, Gamble GD, Reid IR, Calcium supplements with or without vitamin D and risk of cardiovascular events: reanalysis of the Women’s Health Initiative limited access dataset and meta-analysis, *BMJ* 2011;342:d2040

³ Bolland MJ, Avenell A, Baron JA, Grey A, MacLennan GS, Gamble GD, Reid IR. Effect of calcium supplements on risk of myocardial infarction and cardiovascular events: meta-analysis. *BMJ*. 2010 Jul 29;341:c3691. doi: 10.1136/bmj.c3691.

⁴ Kuanrong Li, Rudolf Kaaks, Jakob Linseisen, and Sabine Rohrmann. Associations of dietary calcium intake and calcium supplementation with myocardial infarction and stroke risk and overall cardiovascular mortality in the Heidelberg cohort of the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition study. *Heart* 2012;98:920e925, May 2012

⁵ Tang BM, Eslick GD, Nowson C, Smith C, Bensoussan A. Use of calcium or calcium in combination with vitamin D supplementation to prevent fractures and bone loss in people aged 50 years and older: a meta-analysis. *Lancet*. 2007 Aug 25;370(9588):657-66.

⁶ Osteoporosis Australia. *Calcium Supplements: latest debate – safety of calcium supplements.* www.osteoporosis.org.au

who may be at risk of fracture, the elderly, or those whose dietary calcium intake is inadequate.

"Consumers should continue to aim for the recommended daily calcium intake of 1000-1300mg/day, depending on their age and sex⁷, and they should do this through eating a healthy diet or from supplements where their dietary intake was inadequate", Mr Roper said.

A 2007 Australian study found that calcium, and calcium in combination with Vitamin D, was associated with a 12% reduction in fractures of all types including hip, vertebrae and wrist. In instances where there was a higher compliance rate, the treatment was associated with a much higher 24% reduction in fractures⁸. This further evidence supports the positive role calcium supplements play.

www.nzsmi.org.nz

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About SMI: The New Zealand Self-Medication Industry Association Inc (SMI) is the national trade association representing manufacturers, marketers and distributors of a wide range of products, generally available "over-the-counter" (OTC) and mainly for use in self-medication by New Zealand consumers. SMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all New Zealanders at a reasonable cost. SMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy.

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⁷ Australian Government, DOHA, NHMRC Recommended Dietary Intakes

⁸ Tang BM, Eslick GD, Nowson C, Smith C, Bensoussan A. Use of calcium or calcium in combination with vitamin D supplementation to prevent fractures and bone loss in people aged 50 years and older: a meta-analysis. *Lancet*. 2007 Aug 25;370(9588):657-66.