

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Let's say you've been taking calcium supplements. That's great, most of us should be! Now, you think you need to start taking a fiber supplement too. Maybe you're not feeling very 'regular' these days. Or you've been reading up on the benefits of fiber to bring down your cholesterol or lower your heart risks. Now the question is - Should you take them together, or do you have to take them at different times?

There are products on the market that contain both of them in one pill or packet. And yet there is information saying that high fiber meals can prevent the absorption of minerals, especially calcium. Which one is right? As with many things in the diet world today, it's a matter of amounts and kinds.

It is true that people who continually eat a very high fiber diet can become deficient in some minerals. Many documented instances have involved areas where all the bread or grain products were whole grain. So the kind of fiber in those diets was mostly bran, the insoluble fiber from grains. Wheat bran is one of the more common offenders. Minerals can bind to the fiber as they both go through the intestines. They get so tightly bound that the minerals get carried out in the stool instead of being absorbed.

However the other kind of fiber, soluble fiber, does not usually bind minerals in the same way. Soluble fibers include a lot of the fiber in oats and barley, and many of the fibers used in fiber supplements. These are often extracted from seeds or roots. Pectin, the fiber that thickens our jams and jellies, is another type of soluble fiber. So

just the kind of fiber used in the supplements suggests that it won't be a problem.

Calcium is one of the minerals that can be tied up with fiber. Zinc is another one. Some other minerals get caught too. But generally, unless the amount of fiber is very high it won't make a significant difference in how much of the minerals we absorb.

Finally, consider when and how you take the supplements. If you take a fiber supplement with a meal it usually won't have as many side effects (gas, etc.), so that's the recommended time. Calcium too is usually better absorbed when it's taken with food. And lucky for us, when we dilute these supplements with lots of other foods, they are much less likely to react with each other. That's exactly what research has found.

Even if both calcium and fiber supplements are taken together, if they're taken with or just before a meal, the fiber will not effect how much calcium you can absorb. Unless you are taking huge amounts of fiber, on a regular daily basis for weeks or months, the fiber is not going to limit how much calcium or other minerals you will absorb.

But remember that what will be most helpful to your bodies is to get as much of our fiber, our minerals and our other nutrients, from foods instead of pills. A high fiber food will give us multiple other minerals, vitamins, calories and protective phytonutrients as well as the fiber. A glass of milk, a slice of cheese, a cup of yogurt will give us calcium, plus protein, potassium, magnesium and other nutrients as well. And it is generally easier for our bodies to control how much we absorb, getting enough but not too much, when we get our nutrition from foods. So, go ahead and take both supplements if you want and can afford them. Lots of supplements are expensive. And try to keep your diet as nutritious as possible so that you don't need a lot of pills too.

Here's an easy recipe for a cool summer dessert that adds some fiber. Serve with whipped topping, or better yet some low fat vanilla yogurt for calcium.

Pineapple Cake

1 16oz pkg angel food cake mix 2 20oz cans crushed pineapple in juice
2 Tbsp orange marmalade 1 Tbsp cornstarch
1 Tbsp water

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9x13 inch baking pan with cooking spray. Combine cake mix and ONE can of pineapple, undrained, in a large bowl. Stir until smooth. Pour into pan and smooth the top. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until golden brown. Cool in pan 30 min. While cake bakes, combine cornstarch and water in small saucepan until smooth. Add marmalade and second can of undrained pineapple. Bring to boil and simmer while stirring, about 2 minutes or until it thickens. Cool. To serve cut cake into squares and top with 2 Tbsp of sauce. Serves 20.