

Calcium supplements may help prevent colon cancer by forestalling colorectal polyps (benign tumors in the large intestine that can turn cancerous). Research shows that calcium supplements may slow recurrence of polyps in those who have had them removed and prevent the development of polyps in people who have never experienced them before. Colon cancer is the third most common cancer in US and accounts for about one in ten cancer deaths.

In a study published in the January issue of The New England Journal of Medicine, researchers at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire, studied more than 800 people whose average age was in the early 60s. These folks had each had at least one polyp removed from the large intestine. Researchers divided study participants into two groups – those taking daily calcium supplements and those taking placebo (dummy) pills.

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Researchers then looked into the participants' large intestines via colonoscopy (using a flexible scope) at 2 separate times: at 9 months and then at 3 years after the study began. For those participants with a history of polyps, the calcium supplements reduced the risk of developing any polyps at all by 17%. Overall, the calcium takers suffered 24% fewer polyps than the group that didn't take calcium.

The researchers argue calcium offers effective preventive medicine: avoiding side effects and providing several benefits (including protection against the bone-thinning deterioration of osteoporosis). Scientists have not yet discerned the mechanism with which calcium prevents polyps, but they postulate that the mineral may alter the liver's bile acid secretions that influence polyp development.

Are you in danger of colon cancer? To lower your risk of succumbing to this rampant disease, the American Cancer Society recommends visiting your health practitioner for regular intestinal screenings beginning at age 50.

*Nature's Health Coral Calcium*