

## **Denver Center for Endocrine Surgery**

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### **CALCIUM SUPPLEMENTS AFTER THYROID OR PARATHYROID SURGERY**

**\*\*IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU TAKE ANY CALCIUM OR ADDITIONAL MEDICATIONS  
EXACTLY AS PRESCRIBED.\*\***

Calcium is a mineral found in foods that is essential for healthy bones, teeth, and salt balance. You may be asked to take extra calcium after surgery. There are many different brands available, but the three most common are:

- Calcium Carbonate (Tums, Caltrate)
- Calcium Citrate (Citracal)
- Calcium phosphate (Posture D)

Low calcium is common after thyroid or parathyroid surgery. You may be asked to purchase a calcium supplement PRIOR to your surgery and bring it with you to the hospital on the day of surgery.

**TUMS is preferred for most patients. If you take an acid-blocking medication, Calcium Citrate is preferred.**

#### **Symptoms of low calcium:**

- Tingling or numbness around the mouth/nose.
- Tingling or numbness in the fingertips/toes.
- Muscle cramps, spasms, or twitching.

**If you experience symptoms of low calcium, TAKE 2 EXTRA DOSES OF CALCIUM.  
If your symptoms do not get better within 30 minutes, you should contact your doctor.**

If you have low calcium after surgery, you may be prescribed additional medications that affect blood calcium levels:

- Calcitriol (Rocaltrol) - is a prescription-strength activated Vitamin D tablet. Calcitriol works by altering the absorption and processing of calcium. Other forms of vitamin D are ineffective if the parathyroids are weak. There is no over-the-counter substitute for Calcitriol. **CALCITRIOL IS NOT A CALCIUM SUPPLEMENT AND MUST BE TAKEN AS PRESCRIBED AND SHOULD NOT BE SKIPPED OR DOUBLED.**
- Calcium acetate (PhosLo) - is a phosphate binder that helps balance the phosphate-calcium levels by interfering with dietary absorption of phosphorus. It should be taken as prescribed with meals.
- Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ) - is a diuretic medication (water pill) that affects absorption of calcium in the kidneys.