HELPFUL TESTS
A few simple tests can help to give you some insight into your bone health and osteoporosis risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEST</th>
<th>WHAT IT CHECKS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bone mineral density testing (may also be called BMD testing or a DEXA test)</td>
<td>This is a simple, noninvasive test that your doctor can send you for if it is determined you are at risk of osteoporosis. This test uses a type of X-ray and provides an assessment of your bone thickness. This is the most common and accurate assessment currently used to determine bone density and osteoporosis.</td>
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<td>Vitamin D testing (also called a 25-hydroxy vitamin D test)</td>
<td>Although not commonly used to evaluate osteoporosis risk, this blood test can tell you your vitamin D status. Vitamin D is important in the health of bone, muscle, and even the immune system, so knowing your vitamin D status can be a valuable tool in overall health assessment, particularly for preventive medicine.</td>
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<td>Urinary N telopeptide</td>
<td>This is a marker of bone resorption that is found in the urine. This test is most often used to measure the short-term effects of therapies used in the treatment of osteoporosis. This test allows your doctor to see if a treatment is slowing down the process of bone breakdown.</td>
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CALCIUM FACTS

Recommended intake
The recommended calcium intake for adults under 50 is 1,000 mg per day. For those over 50, the number jumps to 1,500 mg per day. That is a lot of calcium, and many people will have difficulty getting this much calcium from food alone.

Luckily, a variety of calcium supplements is available on the market.

Elemental calcium
This refers to the amount of calcium that is in a calcium compound. For example, calcium carbonate and calcium citrate are two types of calcium compounds and each one contains a different percentage of calcium.

When your doctor recommends 1,000 mg of calcium, he or she is referring to elemental calcium. In Canada the calcium content listed on your supplement bottle is referring to elemental calcium content.

Calcium carbonate
This form of calcium contains a high amount of elemental calcium compared to other forms of calcium, such as malate or citrate. In other words, gram for gram, calcium carbonate contains more elemental calcium than these other forms of calcium.

This is why you generally need to take fewer tablets or capsules of a product containing calcium carbonate in order to get the same dose of calcium found in several more capsules or tablets of citrate, malate, or some other forms of calcium.

Calcium citrate
Some people with reduced levels of stomach acid can absorb calcium citrate more easily than calcium carbonate. In addition, calcium citrate is absorbed by the body equally effectively taken with or without food.

Calcium citrate contains a lower amount of elemental calcium than does calcium carbonate.

Absorbability
Many factors affect the absorption of calcium. For example, calcium carbonate seems to be affected by stomach acidity, vitamin D levels, and estrogen status to a greater degree than calcium citrate.

In women under 30, there does not seem to be a significant difference in effect between calcium carbonate and calcium citrate in terms of absorption or effect on bone. In postmenopausal women, calcium citrate may be better absorbed.

Absorption is also affected by the total amount of elemental calcium consumed at one time; the higher the elemental calcium, the lower the percentage of absorption. Because absorption is highest in doses of less than 500 mg, a daily dose of 1,000 mg is better absorbed in two separate doses.

Side effects
Some people experience uncomfortable side effects when taking calcium supplements, such as gas, bloating, or constipation. This may be resolved by spreading out the dose of calcium over the course of the day, taking it with meals, or even changing the brand of supplement.