

Instructions for taking calcium carbonate (ie, Tums, chewable tablets) after a thyroidectomy

The amount of calcium to take depends on the dose (number of milligrams of calcium carbonate per tablet). Check the bottle for the dosage. Of note: 40% of calcium carbonate is actual elemental calcium. (for instance, a 500mg tablet of calcium carbonate contains 200mg of calcium, a 750mg tablet contains 300mg, a 1,000 mg tablet contains 400mg). Patients needing calcium after a total thyroidectomy often need 2,000mg or more of elemental calcium per day (equivalent to 5,000mg of calcium carbonate). Your doctor may advise you on the amount to take using a format similar to the one below:

If you have 500mg tablets (i.e., regular strength Tums), take ____ tablets, 3 times a day (take in the morning, mid-day and before bedtime).

If you have 750mg tablets (i.e., Tums Extra Strength typically is this dose): take ____ tablets, 3 times a day (take in the morning, mid-day and before bedtime).

If you have 1,000mg tablets (i.e. Tums Ultra is typically this dose): take ____ tablets, 3 times a day (take in the morning, mid-day and before bedtime).

If you have a prescription for vitamin D (i.e., Rocaltrol or calcitriol), it is important to take this daily and according to the directions on your prescription. Vitamin D allows for better absorption and retention of calcium, creating a more stable calcium level in your body.