

**Calcium Glycerophosphate**

Calcii glycerophosphas; Calcio, glicerofosfato de; Calcium Glycerinophosphate; Calcium, glycérphosphate de; Calcium Glycerylphosphate; Glycerofosforečnan vápenatý; Calcio glicerofosfata; Kalcium-glicerofoszfát; Kalciumglycerofosfat; Kalsiumglycerofosfaatti.

$\text{C}_3\text{H}_7\text{CaO}_6\text{P}(\text{xH}_2\text{O}) = 210.1$  (anhydrous).

CAS — 27214-00-2 (anhydrous calcium glycerophosphate).

ATC — A12AA08.

ATC Vet — QA12AA08.

**Pharmacopoeias.** In *Eur.* (see p.vii), *US.*, and *Viet.*

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Glycerophosphate). A mixture in variable proportions of calcium (*RS*)-2,3-dihydroxypropyl phosphate and of calcium 2-hydroxy-1-(hydroxymethyl)ethyl phosphate, which may be hydrated. It contains not less than 18.6% and not more than 19.4% of calcium, calculated with reference to the dried substance. A white or almost white, hygroscopic powder. Sparingly soluble in water; practically insoluble in alcohol. It loses not more than 12% of its weight on drying.

**USP 31** (Calcium Glycerophosphate). A mixture, in variable proportions, of calcium (*RS*)-2,3-dihydroxypropyl phosphate and calcium 2-hydroxy-1-(hydroxymethyl)ethyl phosphate, which may be hydrated. It contains not less than 18.6% and not more than 19.4% of calcium, calculated with reference to the dried substance. Store at a temperature between 20° and 25°, excursions permitted between 15° and 30°.

**Equivalence.** Each g of calcium glycerophosphate (anhydrous) represents about 4.8 mmol of calcium. Calcium glycerophosphate (anhydrous) 5.24 g is equivalent to about 1 g of calcium.

**Calcium Hydrogen Phosphate**

Calcii et Hydrogenii Phosphas; Calcii hydrogenophosphas; Calcio, hydrogenofosfato de; Calcium, hydrogenophosphate de; Calcium Hydrophosphoricum; Calcium Monohydrogen Phosphate; Dicalcium Orthophosphate; Dicalcium Phosphate; E341; Hydrogenfosforečnan vápenatý; Kalcio-vandenilio fosfatas; Kalcium-hidrogen-foszfát; Kalciumvätefosfat; Kalsiumvetyfosfaatti; Wapna wodorofosforan. Calcium hydrogen orthophosphate.

$\text{CaHPO}_4 = 136.1$  (anhydrous); 172.1 (dihydrate).

CAS — 7757-93-9 (anhydrous calcium hydrogen phosphate); 7789-77-7 (calcium hydrogen phosphate dihydrate).

**Pharmacopoeias.** In *Chin.*, *Eur.* (see p.vii), *Int.*, *Jpn.*, and *US.*, which includes monographs for the anhydrous substance and the dihydrate form.

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Hydrogen Phosphate, Anhydrous; Calcii Hydrogenophosphas Anhydricus). A white or almost white, crystalline powder, or colourless crystals. Practically insoluble in water and in alcohol; dissolves in dilute hydrochloric acid and in dilute nitric acid.

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Hydrogen Phosphate Dihydrate; Calcii Hydrogenophosphas Dihydricus; Calcium Hydrogen Phosphate BP 2008). A white or almost white, crystalline powder. Practically insoluble in cold water and in alcohol; dissolves in dilute hydrochloric acid and in dilute nitric acid.

The BP 2008 gives Dibasic Calcium Phosphate as an approved synonym.

**USP 31** (Anhydrous Dibasic Calcium Phosphate).

**USP 31** (Dibasic Calcium Phosphate Dihydrate).

**Equivalence.** Each g of calcium hydrogen phosphate (dihydrate) represents about 5.8 mmol of calcium and of phosphate. Calcium hydrogen phosphate (dihydrate) 4.29 g is equivalent to about 1 g of calcium.

**Calcium Lactate**

Calcii lactas; Calcio, lactato de; Calcium, lactate de; E327; Kalcio laktatas; Kalciumlaktat; Kalcium-laktát; Kalsiumlaktaatti; Kalsiyum Laktat; Mléčnan vápenatý; Wapnia mleczan. Calcium 2-hydroxypropionate.

$\text{C}_6\text{H}_{10}\text{CaO}_6\text{xH}_2\text{O} = 218.2$  (anhydrous); 308.3 (pentahydrate); 272.3 (trihydrate).

CAS — 814-80-2 (anhydrous calcium lactate); 41372-22-9 (hydrated calcium lactate); 5743-47-5 (calcium lactate pentahydrate); 63690-56-2 (calcium lactate pentahydrate).

ATC — A12AA05.

ATC Vet — QA12AA05.

**Pharmacopoeias.** In *Chin.*, *Eur.* (see p.vii), *Jpn.*, and *US.*

*Eur.* has separate monographs for the anhydrous substance, the monohydrate, the pentahydrate, and the trihydrate. *US* allows anhydrous or hydrous forms. *Viet.* has monographs for the pentahydrate and the trihydrate.

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Lactate, Anhydrous; Calcii Lactas Anhydricus). A white or almost white, crystalline or granular powder. Soluble in water; freely soluble in boiling water; very slightly soluble in alcohol.

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Lactate Monohydrate; Calcii Lactas Monohydricus). A white or almost white, crystalline or granular powder. Soluble in water; freely soluble in boiling water; very slightly soluble in alcohol.

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Lactate Pentahydrate; Calcii Lactas Pentahydricus). A white or almost white, slightly efflorescent, crystalline or granular powder. Soluble in water; freely soluble in boiling water; very slightly soluble in alcohol.

The BP 2008 gives Calcium Lactate as an approved synonym.

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Lactate Trihydrate; Calcii Lactas Trihydricus). A white or almost white, crystalline or granular powder. Soluble in water; freely soluble in boiling water; very slightly soluble in alcohol.

**USP 31** (Calcium Lactate). White, practically odourless, granules or powder. The pentahydrate is somewhat efflorescent and at 120° becomes anhydrous. The pentahydrate is soluble 1 in 20 of water and practically insoluble in alcohol. Store in airtight containers.

**Equivalence.** Each g of calcium lactate (trihydrate) represents about 3.7 mmol of calcium. Each g of calcium lactate (pentahydrate) represents about 3.2 mmol of calcium. Calcium lactate (pentahydrate) 7.7 g and calcium lactate (trihydrate) 6.8 g are each equivalent to about 1 g of calcium.

**Calcium Lactate Gluconate**

Calcio, gluconato lactato de.

$\text{Ca}_2(\text{C}_3\text{H}_5\text{O}_3)_6(\text{C}_6\text{H}_{11}\text{O}_7)_4\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O} = 1551.4$ .

ATC — A12AA06.

ATC Vet — QA12AA06.

**Equivalence.** Each g of calcium lactate gluconate (dihydrate) represents about 3.2 mmol of calcium. Calcium lactate gluconate (dihydrate) 7.74 g is equivalent to about 1 g of calcium.

**Calcium Lactobionate**

Calcii Lactobionas; Calcio, lactobionato de; Calcium Lactobionate Dihydrate; Kalciumlaktobionat; Kalsiumlaktobionaat. Calcium 4-O-β-D-galactopyranosyl-D-gluconate dihydrate.

$\text{C}_{24}\text{H}_{42}\text{CaO}_{24}\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O} = 790.7$ .

CAS — 110638-68-1.

**Pharmacopoeias.** In *US.*

**USP 31** (Calcium Lactobionate). pH of a 5% solution in water is between 5.4 and 7.4.

**Equivalence.** Each g of calcium lactobionate (dihydrate) represents about 1.3 mmol of calcium. Calcium lactobionate (dihydrate) 19.7 g is equivalent to about 1 g of calcium.

**Calcium Levulinate** (BAN)

Calcii Laevulas; Calcii laevulinas; Calcii Laevulinas Dihydricus; Calcii Levulinas Dihydricum; Calcio, levulinato de; Calcium Laevulate; Calcium Laevulinate; Calcium, levúlinat de; Calcio levulinatas; Kalciumlevulat; Kalcium-levulát dihydrát; Kalciumlevulinat; Kalcium-levulinát; Kalsiumlevulaatti; Kalsiumlevulinaatti; Lévlínate. Calcique. Calcium 4-oxovalerate dihydrate.

$\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{14}\text{CaO}_6\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O} = 306.3$ .

CAS — 591-64-0 (anhydrous calcium levulinate); 5743-49-7 (calcium levulinate dihydrate).

ATC — A12AA30.

ATC Vet — QA12AA30.

**Pharmacopoeias.** In *Eur.* (see p.vii) and *US.*

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Levulinate Dihydrate). A white or almost white, crystalline powder. Freely soluble in water; very slightly soluble in alcohol; practically insoluble in dichloromethane. A 10% solution in water has a pH of 6.8 to 7.8. Protect from light.

**USP 31** (Calcium Levulinate). A white crystalline or amorphous powder, having a faint odour suggestive of burnt sugar. Freely soluble in water; slightly soluble in alcohol; insoluble in chloroform and in ether. pH of a 10% solution in water is between 7.0 and 8.5.

**Equivalence.** Each g of calcium levulinate (dihydrate) represents about 3.3 mmol of calcium. Calcium levulinate (dihydrate) 7.64 g is equivalent to about 1 g of calcium.

**Calcium Phosphate**

Calcii Phosphas; Calcio, fosfato de; Calcium Orthophosphate; E341; Fosfato Tricalcico; Fosforečnan vápenatý; Kalcio fosfatas; Kalcium-foszfát; Phosphate Tertiaire de Calcium; Phosphate tricalcique; Precipitated Calcium Phosphate; Tricalcii phosphas; Tricalcium Phosphate; Trikalciumfosfat; Trikalciumfosfaatti; Wapnia fosforan.

CAS — 7758-87-4 (tricalcium diorthophosphate); 12167-74-7 (calcium hydroxide phosphate).

ATC — A12AA01.

ATC Vet — QA12AA01.

**Description.** Calcium phosphate is not a clearly defined chemical entity but is a mixture of calcium phosphates that has been most frequently described as either tricalcium diorthophosphate,  $\text{Ca}_3(\text{PO}_4)_2 = 310.2$ , or calcium hydroxide phosphate,  $\text{Ca}_5\text{OH}(\text{PO}_4)_3 = 502.3$ .

**Pharmacopoeias.** In *Eur.* (see p.vii), *Int.*, and *Viet.* Also in *US-NF*.

**Ph. Eur. 6.2** (Calcium Phosphate). It consists of a mixture of calcium phosphates and contains 35 to 40% of Ca. A white or almost white powder. Practically insoluble in water; dissolves in dilute hydrochloric acid and in dilute nitric acid.

The BP 2008 gives Tribasic Calcium Phosphate as an approved synonym.

**USNF 26** (Tribasic Calcium Phosphate). It consists of a variable mixture of calcium phosphates having the approximate composition  $10\text{CaO}\cdot 3\text{P}_2\text{O}_5\cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ . It contains not less than 34% and not more than 40% of calcium. A white, odourless, powder. Practically insoluble in water; insoluble in alcohol; readily soluble in 3N hydrochloric acid and in 2N nitric acid.

**Calcium Pidolate** (pINNM)

Calcii Pidolas; Calcium Pyroglutamate; Pidolate de Calcium; Pidolato de calcio. Calcium 5-oxopyrrolidine-2-carboxylate.

Кальций Пидолат

$\text{Ca}(\text{C}_5\text{H}_5\text{NO}_3)_2 = 296.3$ .

CAS — 31377-05-6.

**Equivalence.** Each g of calcium pidolate (anhydrous) represents about 3.4 mmol of calcium. Calcium pidolate (anhydrous) 7.39 g is equivalent to about 1 g of calcium.

**Calcium Silicate**

Calcio, silicato de; E552.

CAS — 1344-95-2; 10101-39-0 (calcium metasilicate); 10034-77-2 (calcium diorthosilicate); 12168-85-3 (calcium trisilicate).

ATC — A02AC02.

ATC Vet — QA02AC02.

**Description.** A naturally occurring mineral, the most common forms being calcium metasilicate ( $\text{CaSiO}_3 = 116.2$ ), calcium diorthosilicate ( $\text{Ca}_2\text{SiO}_4 = 172.2$ ), and calcium trisilicate ( $\text{Ca}_3\text{SiO}_5 = 228.3$ ). It is usually found in hydrated forms containing various amounts of water of crystallisation. Commercial calcium silicate is prepared synthetically.

**Pharmacopoeias.** In *USNF*.

**USNF 26** (Calcium Silicate). Crystalline or amorphous calcium silicate is a compound of calcium oxide and silicon dioxide containing not less than 4% of CaO and not less than 35% of  $\text{SiO}_2$ . A white to off-white free-flowing powder. Insoluble in water; with mineral acids it forms a gel. A 5% aqueous suspension has a pH of 8.4 to 11.2.

**Calcium Sodium Lactate**

Calcio, lactato sódico de.

$2\text{C}_3\text{H}_5\text{NaO}_3\cdot (\text{C}_3\text{H}_5\text{O}_3)_2\text{Ca}\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O} = 514.4$ .

**Equivalence.** Each g of calcium sodium lactate (tetrahydrate) represents about 1.9 mmol of calcium and 3.9 mmol of sodium and of lactate. Calcium sodium lactate (tetrahydrate) 12.8 g is equivalent to about 1 g of calcium.

**Adverse Effects and Treatment**

Oral calcium salts can cause gastrointestinal irritation; calcium chloride is generally considered to be the most irritant of the commonly used calcium salts.

Injection of calcium salts can also produce irritation, and intramuscular or subcutaneous injection in particular can cause local reactions including sloughing or necrosis of the skin; solutions of calcium chloride are extremely irritant and should not be injected intramuscularly or subcutaneously. Soft-tissue calcification has followed the use of calcium salts parenterally.

Excessive amounts of calcium salts may lead to hypercalcaemia. This complication is usually associated with parenteral use, but can occur after oral dosage, usually in patients with renal failure or who are also taking vitamin D. Symptoms of hypercalcaemia include anorexia, nausea, vomiting, constipation, abdominal pain, muscle weakness, mental disturbances, polydipsia, polyuria, nephrocalcinosis, renal calculi, and, in severe cases, cardiac arrhythmias and coma. Too rapid intravenous injection of calcium salts may also lead to symptoms of hypercalcaemia, as well as a chalky taste, hot flushes, and peripheral vasodilatation. Mild asymptomatic hypercalcaemia will usually resolve if calcium and other contributory drugs such as vitamin D are stopped (see also Vitamin D-mediated Hypercalcaemia, p.1668). If hypercalcaemia is severe, urgent treatment is required as outlined on p.1668.

**Precautions**

Solutions of calcium salts, particularly calcium chloride, are irritant, and care should be taken to prevent extravasation during intravenous injection. Calcium salts should be given cautiously to patients with renal impairment, or diseases associated with hypercalcaemia such as sarcoidosis and some malignancies. In

addition, they should generally be avoided in patients with calcium renal calculi, or a history of renal calculi. Calcium chloride, because of its acidifying nature, is unsuitable for the treatment of hypocalcaemia caused by renal insufficiency or in patients with respiratory acidosis or failure.

Plasma-calcium concentrations should be monitored closely in patients with renal impairment and during parenteral dosage and if large doses of vitamin D are used concurrently.

### Interactions

Hypercalcaemia has occurred when calcium salts are given with thiazide diuretics or vitamin D. Vitamin D increases the gastrointestinal absorption of calcium and thiazide diuretics decrease its urinary excretion. Plasma-calcium concentrations should be monitored in patients receiving the drugs together.

Bran decreases the gastrointestinal absorption of calcium, and may therefore decrease the efficacy of calcium supplements. Corticosteroids also reduce calcium absorption.

Calcium enhances the effects of digitalis glycosides on the heart and may precipitate digitalis intoxication; parenteral calcium therapy is best avoided in patients receiving cardiac glycosides. Citrate salts increase the absorption of aluminium from the gastrointestinal tract (see Toxicity, under Adverse Effects of Aluminium Hydroxide, p.1706), therefore patients with renal failure taking aluminium compounds should avoid taking calcium citrate. Calcium salts reduce the absorption of a number of other drugs such as bisphosphonates, fluoride, some fluoroquinolones, and tetracyclines; doses should be separated by at least 3 hours.

### Pharmacokinetics

Calcium is absorbed mainly from the small intestine by active transport and passive diffusion. About one-third of ingested calcium is absorbed although this can vary depending upon dietary factors and the state of the small intestine; also absorption is increased in calcium deficiency and during periods of high physiological requirement such as during childhood or pregnancy and lactation. 1,25-Dihydroxycholecalciferol (calcitriol), a metabolite of vitamin D, enhances the active phase of absorption.

Excess calcium is mainly excreted renally. Unabsorbed calcium is eliminated in the faeces, together with that secreted in the bile and pancreatic juice. Minor amounts are lost in the sweat, skin, hair, and nails. Calcium crosses the placenta and is distributed into breast milk.

### Human Requirements

Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the body and is an essential body electrolyte. However, defining individual calcium requirements has proved difficult and guidelines vary widely by country and culture. Some authorities have adopted a factorial approach. For example, in the UK the dietary reference value (DRV) represents the apparent calcium requirements of healthy people under the prevailing dietary circumstances. The amount of calcium absorbed varies according to several factors including the requirements of the body, but is normally only about 30 to 40% of the dietary intake.

The richest dietary sources of calcium are milk and milk products. Significant amounts can also be consumed in green leafy vegetables, fortified flour, the soft bones of fish, and hard water.

**UK and US recommended dietary intake.** In the UK dietary reference values (DRV—see Human Requirements, p.1925) have been published for calcium.<sup>1</sup> In the USA recommended dietary allowances (RDA) had been set,<sup>2</sup> but have been replaced by dietary reference intakes (see p.1925).<sup>3</sup> In the UK the estimated average requirement (EAR) for adults is 525 mg (13.1 mmol) daily and the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for adults is 700 mg (17.5 mmol) daily; these figures are based on a mean absorption of calcium of 30% from mixed diets. In the USA the traditional RDA was 800 mg daily for adults aged over 25 years; this figure

**Table 1.** Some calcium salts and their calcium content.

Calcium salt	Calcium content per g		
	mg	mmol	mEq
Calcium acetate (anhydrous)	253	6.3	12.6
Calcium carbonate	400	10.0	20.0
Calcium chloride (dihydrate)	273	6.8	13.6
Calcium chloride (hexahydrate)	183	4.6	9.1
Calcium citrate (tetrahydrate)	211	5.3	10.5
Calcium gluconate (monohydrate)	66	1.6	3.3
Calcium glucoheptonate (anhydrous)	82	2.0	4.1
Calcium gluconate (monohydrate)	89	2.2	4.5
Calcium glycerophosphate (anhydrous)	191	4.8	9.5
Calcium hydrogen phosphate (dihydrate)	233	5.8	11.6
Calcium lactate (anhydrous)	184	4.6	9.2
Calcium lactate (trihydrate)	147	3.7	7.3
Calcium lactate (pentahydrate)	130	3.2	6.5
Calcium lactate gluconate (dihydrate)	129	3.2	6.4
Calcium lactobionate (dihydrate)	51	1.3	2.5
Calcium levulinate (dihydrate)	131	3.3	6.5
Calcium phosphate [10CaO.3P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> .H <sub>2</sub> O]	399	10.0	19.9
Calcium pidolate (anhydrous)	135	3.4	6.7
Calcium silicate [CaSiO <sub>3</sub> ]	345	8.6	17.2
Calcium sodium lactate (tetrahydrate)	78	1.9	3.9

was based on an absorption rate of 40%. Under the new dietary reference intakes, adequate intakes (AI) for calcium have been set, which are higher in some age groups than the previous RDAs.<sup>3</sup> For adults aged up to 50 years the AI is 1 g daily, and for those 51 years or older, it is 1.2 g daily.<sup>3</sup> The tolerable upper intake is considered to be 2.5 g daily.<sup>3</sup>

1. DoH. Dietary reference values for food energy and nutrients for the United Kingdom: report of the panel on dietary reference values of the committee on medical aspects of food policy. *Report on health and social subjects 41*. London: HMSO, 1991.
2. Subcommittee on the tenth edition of the RDAs, Food and Nutrition Board, Commission on Life Sciences, National Research Council. *Recommended dietary allowances*. 10th ed. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1989. Also available at: <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=0309046335> (accessed 21/07/08)
3. Standing Committee on the Scientific Evaluation of Dietary Reference Intakes of the Food and Nutrition Board. *Dietary Reference Intakes for calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, vitamin D, and fluoride*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999. Also available at: <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=0309063507> (accessed 21/07/08)

### Uses and Administration

Calcium salts are used in the management of **hypocalcaemia** (p.1668) and **calcium deficiency states** resulting from dietary deficiency or ageing (see also Osteoporosis, p.1084). Doses may be expressed in terms of mmol or mEq of calcium, mass (mg) of calcium, or mass of calcium salt (for comparative purposes, see Table 1, above).

In simple deficiency states calcium salts may be given orally, usually in doses of 10 to 50 mmol (400 mg to 2 g) of calcium daily adjusted to the individual patient's requirements.

In severe acute hypocalcaemia or hypocalcaemic tetany parenteral dosage is necessary, generally by slow intravenous injection or continuous infusion of calcium chloride or calcium gluconate (see also Administration, below). A typical dose is 2.25 to 4.5 mmol of calcium by slow intravenous injection, either repeated as required, or followed by continuous intravenous infusion of about 9 mmol daily. 2.25 mmol of calcium is provided by 10 mL of calcium gluconate 10%. Calcium gluceptate and calcium glycerophosphate with calcium lactate have been given by the intramuscular route; the chloride and gluconate are unsuitable for this route because of their irritancy. The intravenous route is used in children.

Intravenous calcium salts are also used to reverse the toxic cardiac effects of potassium in the emergency

treatment of severe **hyperkalaemia** (p.1669), and as an antidote to magnesium in severe **hypermagnesaemia** (p.1668). For these indications, 2.25 to 4.5 mmol of calcium (10 to 20 mL of calcium gluconate 10%) is commonly used.

Individual calcium salts have specific uses. Calcium carbonate (p.1714) or acetate are effective phosphate binders and are given orally to reduce phosphate absorption from the gut in patients with **hyperphosphataemia**; this is particularly relevant to patients with chronic renal failure in order to prevent the development of renal osteodystrophy (p.1086). The initial dose of calcium carbonate is 2.5 g daily titrated to a maximum of 17 g daily. A typical initial dose of calcium acetate is 3 or 4 g daily; most patients require 6 to 12 g daily.

Calcium carbonate and calcium silicate, given orally, are used for their **antacid** properties (p.1692).

Some of the calcium salts discussed here also have *pharmaceutical uses* as diluents in capsules and tablets, buffers and dissolution aids in dispersible tablets, disintegrant and anticaking agents, and as a basis or abrasive in dental preparations. Calcium phosphate is also used as a bone graft substitute.

**Homoeopathy.** Various calcium salts have been used in homoeopathic medicines under the following names:

- Calcium acetate: Calcarea acetica; Calc. ace.
- Calcium arsenite: Calcium arsenicosum; Calcarea arsenicosa; Cal. ars.
- Calcium chloride: Calcarea muriatica; Cal. mur.
- Calcium hydrogen phosphate: Calcium phosphoricum
- Calcium hypophosphite: Calcarea hypophosphorosa; Calc. hyp.
- Calcium oxalate: Calcarea oxalica; Cal. oxal.
- Calcium phosphate: Calcarea phosphorica; Calc. phos.; Cal. phos.
- Calcium picrate: Calcarea picrata; Cal. pic.
- Calcium silicate: Calcarea silicatica; Calc. sil.

Other calcium salts used in homoeopathy and described elsewhere include: calcium bromide (p.2269), calcium carbonate (p.1714), calcium fluoride (p.1932), calcium hydroxide (p.2272), calcium iodide (p.1553), and calcium sulfate (p.2273).

**Administration.** Some prefer calcium chloride to calcium gluconate for parenteral preparations,<sup>1,2</sup> because retention of the chloride is greater and more predictable than of the gluconate, and results in a more predictable increase in extracellular ionised calcium concentration. However, calcium chloride is considered to be the most irritant of the calcium salts in general use (see Adverse Effects, above).

Calcium gluconate has been given by the intraperitoneal route<sup>3</sup> for the treatment of chronic hypocalcaemia after parathyroidectomy in a patient undergoing continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis, resulting in improved systemic bioavailability compared with oral and intravenous use.

1. Worthley LIG, Phillips PJ. Intravenous calcium salts. *Lancet* 1980; **ii**: 149.
2. Broner CW, et al. A prospective, randomized, double-blind comparison of calcium chloride and calcium gluconate therapies for hypocalcaemia in critically ill children. *J Pediatr* 1990; **117**: 986-9.
3. Stamatakis MK, Seth SK. Treatment of chronic hypocalcaemia with intraperitoneal calcium. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm* 1995; **52**: 201-3.

**Bites and stings.** Calcium gluconate 10% solution has been given intravenously as an alternative to the use of conventional muscle relaxants for the management of pain and muscle spasm associated with neurotoxic spider envenomation (p.2239) by species such as *Latrodectus mactans* (black widow spider).<sup>1,2</sup> Although the precise mechanism of action of calcium in the alleviation of neuromuscular symptoms is unknown it is believed to be due to the replenishment of calcium stores in the sarcoplasmic reticulum of muscle depleted by stimulation.

1. Binder LS. Acute arthropod envenomation: incidence, clinical features and management. *Med Toxicol Adverse Drug Exp* 1989; **4**: 163-73.
2. Woestman R, et al. The black widow: is she deadly to children? *Pediatr Emerg Care* 1996; **12**: 360-4.

**Bone disease.** Calcium is essential for the development and maintenance of normal bone, and calcium salts may be indicated in the treatment of some bone disorders associated with calcium



