

## New Jersey Experts Call for More Calcium

**TRENTON, N.J.**—The latest call for more calcium in the diet hails from experts at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey who suggest that all manufacturers of fruit juices, cereal and baked goods fortify their products with calcium as a means of reducing the absorption of lead and its harmful effects.

John Bogden, lead author of an article in the December issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*, a journal of the National Institutes of Health, said milligram amounts of lead ingested over a period of a few months can cause problems such as reduced intelligence and aggressive behavior in children and anemia, kidney disease and high blood pressure in adults. He also emphasized the importance of increased calcium intake for pregnant and nursing women, as they can pass on to the fetus some of the lead they have accumulated over the years in their bones.

Although lead levels in America have fallen sharply over the last two decades, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported a 10 percent rise in blood lead levels among adults last year. The CDC's report, released Feb. 6, indicates that among 27 states, 17,466 adults had possibly hazardous lead levels of 25

mcg/dcl of blood. Researchers said the increase could have occurred because more people were exposed on the job or because of an increase in the size of the workforce in lead-using industries. The increase also may reflect better reporting of lead-exposed workers.

According to Bogden's report, calcium appears to sharply limit lead absorption in the gastrointestinal tract so that lead is excreted rather than absorbed into the blood. However, dissenters such as Dr. Walter Rogan, an epidemiologist at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, say that although many studies indicate that people who report high calcium intake have low blood levels, it does not prove that calcium is the cause. Rogan said a reliable study would require limiting calcium intake in some children with high lead exposure and comparing them with lead-exposed children receiving at least the minimum reference daily intake. However, such an investigation would be unethical, he stated.

Bogden recommends 500 mg of calcium daily for children aged 1 to 3; 800 mg for those aged 4 to 8 and adults over 80; 1,000 mg for adults aged 19 to 50; and 1,300 mg for those aged 9 to 18.