

Calcium

Why Do I Need It?

Our bodies' need for calcium goes way beyond building bones and teeth. Calcium helps with muscle relaxation, blood clotting, nerve impulse transmission, and enzyme reactions. This list of responsibilities is why it's so important to keep up with calcium consumption. If we don't eat and drink enough calcium, our bodies make calcium withdrawals from our "bone banks." Too many withdrawals, and we're left with weak bones that are susceptible to breakage, including stress fractures.

How Much Do I Need?

The short answer for most of us is: more! Many of us fall far short of our recommended intake. For most adults, the daily calcium recommendation is somewhere between 1,000 and 1,500 milligrams.

Where Can I Get Calcium?

Scan food labels to identify high-calcium items. Look for foods and beverages containing at least 20% of the Daily Value (DV). Check out the list on the other side of this handout for the calcium content of a variety of foods and beverages.

How Can I Boost My Calcium Intake?

- Drink plain or flavored cows' milk or fortified soy milk with meals.
- Eat pudding, custard, ice cream, or frozen yogurt for dessert.
- Keep fruit-flavored yogurt in the fridge for a quick snack or breakfast.
- Use milk instead of water to make hot chocolate. Snack on low-fat cheese with fruit or crackers.
- If you eat cereal bars or energy bars, try calcium-fortified versions. *See page 2.*

What About Supplements?

Supplements are an option if you can't meet your calcium needs by making changes in the types of food and drink you choose. Calcium content and absorption vary from one supplement to the next. Calcium citrate (e.g., Citracal) is better absorbed than calcium carbonate (e.g., Tums, OsCal). The citrate form can be taken on an empty stomach. Calcium carbonate is best taken after meals.

The National Academy of Sciences recommends that no more than 1,000 mg of calcium per day be taken in supplemental form. Remember: the calcium we eat and drink comes packaged with other important nutrients not found in supplements...and with a lot more flavor, too.

What Else Should I Know?

Excess sodium and animal protein increase calcium loss, so go easy on packaged, highly processed foods, and skip high-protein diets, unless medically indicated.

Caffeine increases calcium loss and decreases absorption, so drink extra milk or fortified juice on high-caffeine days.

Vitamin D helps with calcium absorption. Fortified milk and fatty fish like salmon are good sources of vitamin D. Sun exposure stimulates D production in the skin, but the northern half of the US can't rely on this to meet vitamin D needs. Sun exposure may increase skin cancer risk, too. The recommended dose of Vitamin D for men & women (ages 19-70) is 600 IU or 15 mcg daily.

Questions about calcium or another nutrition issue? Call (603) 862-2856 to schedule an appointment with our nutrition counselor.

**Contact a Health & Wellness Health Resource Nurse at (603) 862-2856
For After Hours Care please call (603) 862-9355 (WELL)**

Calcium

Dairy products supply 75% of all the calcium in the U.S. food supply, but there are other foods that provide significant amounts of calcium as well. Remember, fat content does not affect calcium content. Amounts listed are approximate and may vary based on product.

High-Calcium Foods

Approx Calcium per Serving	Food Choice
400 mg	8 oz yogurt without added fruit
300 mg	8 oz milk (any kind) 8 oz fruited yogurt 8 oz calcium-fortified orange juice 1/2 cup part-skim ricotta cheese 1 oz swiss or gruyere cheese 1/2 cup calcium-treated tofu or tempeh 1 calcium-fortified cereal bar
200 mg	1 oz natural cheese 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese 1 serving calcium-fortified cereal (may contain up to 1,000 mg calcium)
150 mg	1 packet calcium-fortified instant oatmeal 1/2 cup cooked collards
100 mg	1 oz nonfat cream cheese 1/2 cup turnip greens or bok choy 1 oz almonds 1/2 cup ice cream, ice milk, or frozen yogurt 1 cup cooked edamame 1/2 cup white beans
50 mg	1/2 cup broccoli 1/2 cup kale or mustard greens or spinach 1/2 cup cottage cheese 1 medium corn tortilla 1 medium orange

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