

Increasing Your Calcium Intake

Eating calcium rich foods helps develop and maintain strong bones and teeth. Getting enough calcium throughout life can help prevent osteoporosis and may decrease the risk of colon cancer.

Amount of Calcium Recommended

Age (years)	Recommended Calcium mg/day	Do Not Exceed mg/day
Children 4-8	1000	2500
Children 9-18	1300	3000
Men and women 19-50	1000	2500
Men 51-70	1000	2000
Women 51-70	1200	2000
Men and women 71 and older	1200	2000
Pregnant and breastfeeding		
14-18 years	1300	3000
19-50 years	1000	2500

The best way to get nutrients, including calcium, is through foods. Contact your health care provider to ask about calcium supplements if you or your children are not able to meet calcium needs through diet.

The following tips will help in planning meals and snacks rich in calcium.



Steps you can take

Increase Your Intake of Milk and Dairy Products:

- | Drink low fat milk (skim, 1%, 2%) with meals and snacks each day.
- | Choose low fat (0%, 1%, 2%) yogurt for breakfast, dessert or snacks.
- | Make a smoothie with low fat yogurt and fruit. Add some skim milk powder for extra calcium.
- | Add extra low fat milk to coffee, or when out, order a latté.
- | Use low fat yogurt as a dip, garnish, spread or a dressing.
- | Choose custards made with low fat milk for dessert or snacks.
- | Add low fat cheese (less than 20% milk fat) to omelettes and scrambled eggs. Top casseroles with low fat cheese.
- | Make soups with low fat milk instead of water.

Increase Your Intake of Calcium Rich Non-Dairy Products:

- | Choose calcium-fortified beverages, such as soy and rice beverages if you don't drink milk, and calcium fortified orange juice.
 - | The calcium added to fortified beverages may separate out of solution so shake these beverages before pouring.
- | Add canned salmon or sardines, including the bones, to sandwiches, salads and casseroles.
- | Add white or navy beans to salads, soups and casseroles. Make a pot of homemade baked beans.
- | Use dark greens such as spinach, collard leaves or turnip greens in salads or add to stir-fries.
- | Add firm or extra-firm tofu made with calcium sulphate to stir-fries and soups.
- | Make your own hummus with tahini (sesame seed paste) and chickpeas. Add tahini to casseroles.
- | Have an almond butter sandwich.

- Grab a handful of plain almonds as a snack. Sprinkle sliced or slivered almonds on top of salads and casseroles.

Read Food Labels:

Read the Nutrition Facts table on packaged foods and choose those foods that are high in calcium.

- You will find the Nutrition Facts table on most packaged food products.
- Look for the Percent Daily Value (%DV) that tells you whether a food has a little or a lot of a given nutrient.
 - Choose a food with 15%DV or more calcium
 - To learn more about how to use %DV and other nutrition information on packaged food labels, see [Understanding Food Labels](#).
- Packaged foods may also have labeling claims. Look for products that say on the label that they are either:
 - a 'good source of calcium', which means the food contains at least 165 mg of calcium per serving; or
 - an 'excellent source of calcium', which means the food contains at least 275 mg of calcium per serving.

Special Considerations:

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is very important in maintaining strong bones. Vitamin D also helps calcium to be absorbed in your body. Good food sources of vitamin D include fish (salmon, whitefish, mackerel and herring), egg yolks, margarine, fortified soymilk and cow's milk. Talk to a dietitian to make sure that you are getting enough vitamin D.

To Reduce Sugar Intake

If you are concerned about the amount of sugar in foods, choose unsweetened, calcium fortified orange juice, soy and rice beverages. Also choose unsweetened low fat yogurts.



Additional Resources

- | Eating Guidelines for Osteoporosis
www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMbrWAO=&PreviewHandout=bA==
- | Food Sources of Calcium www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfrUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==
- | Food Sources of Vitamin D www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMbqWAI=&PreviewHandout=bA==
- | Eating Guidelines to Prevent Osteoporosis – It’s Never Too Late
www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMbrXAO=&PreviewHandout=bA==
- | Understanding Food Labels – Government of Canada
www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/understanding-food-labels/about-food-labels.html

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