

## CALCIUM AND HEALTHY BONES

### Why is calcium so important

Did you know that 99% of your body's calcium is stored in your bones and teeth? This calcium makes up your bone bank. Calcium is "deposited" and "withdrawn" from your bone bank daily, based on your body's need for calcium. If your daily diet is low in calcium, calcium is "withdrawn" from your bone bank. Bone is broken down to keep your blood calcium level normal. This happens because calcium plays a critical role in supporting your body's vital functions; such as controlling your blood pressure and maintaining your heart beat.

### Who should get calcium

It is recommended that everyone, including pregnant or breastfeeding women, consume the daily calcium intake appropriate for age. Your calcium intake from food (preferred source) plus any calcium supplement (if needed) should add up to the daily recommended calcium intake milligrams (mg) per day.

### How much calcium is recommended each day

It is important to know the amount of calcium you need each day. You will find your recommended daily calcium intake on the chart below, listed according to your age and gender.

If this is your age	Then you need this much calcium each day (mg = milligrams)
Birth to 12 months	Supplied by formula or breast milk
1-3	700 mg
4-8	1000 mg
9-18	1300 mg
Men 19 – 70 Women 19 – 50	1000 mg
Women 51-70	1200mg
Men and Women 71+	1200 mg

Recommended Dietary Allowances, Institute of Medicine, 2010

## **How can I get enough calcium**

It is best to get calcium from the foods you eat. Your body uses calcium best in small amounts (600 mg or less at one time). Spread out the calcium you eat each day by choosing a food with calcium at each meal or snack.

## **Foods rich in calcium**

- Dairy foods including milk, cheese, and yogurt (choose nonfat or low fat options)
- Dark green leafy vegetables (bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dandelion greens, kale, mustard greens, and turnip greens)
- Canned fish (salmon, sardines) eaten with bones
- Certain nuts such as almonds and soy nuts
- Calcium fortified foods (foods with calcium added)

## **How do I read a food label for calcium**

The amount of calcium in foods varies depending on the brands you buy. It is important to read labels. The food label can either list calcium in milligrams (mg) or as percent daily value (%DV).

If your food labels state calcium content in milligrams per serving, you can simply add those values to find out how much calcium you consume daily. If your food labels state calcium content in percent daily value (%DV), drop the % and replace with a "0" to find the mg calcium per serving. For example: 20% calcium=200mg of calcium.

## **Is more calcium than the recommended intake better**

There is no benefit for healthy individuals to consume more calcium than recommended. Your health care provider may suggest slightly more calcium for you if you have certain medical conditions or take a medication that interferes with your body's ability to use calcium. It is important not to consume too much calcium on a regular basis. More calcium is not better and chronic high calcium intakes may even be harmful. Therefore, it is important to speak with your health care provider about your calcium requirements.

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**The information contained in this fact sheet should not be considered medical advice. It is important to always speak to your healthcare provider about your individual nutrition needs for strong bones.**

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