

Calcium

WHY WE NEED CALCIUM:

You may know that calcium plays an important role in building healthy teeth and bones. What you may not know is that calcium is vital to every cell of the body for muscle function, nerve transmission, blood clotting and many other uses. When you don't get enough calcium in your diet, the calcium stored in your bones is "stolen" to supply the rest of your body. Hence, your bones suffer the consequences of a low-calcium diet. This is why the bones become more susceptible to fractures.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI's) for calcium vary by age and stage of life:

Age/Lifestage Group	New Calcium Goal (mg/day)
1-3 years old	500
4-8 years old	800
9-18 years old	1300
19-50 years old	1000
51 + years old	1200
Pregnant and/or lactating (18 years old and younger)	1300
Pregnant and/or lactating (19+ years old)	1000

The Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 21 01 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20418; 1997.

Many good sources of calcium fit quite well into a healthy, low-fat diet. The following table includes some examples of low-fat sources of calcium from several food groups:

Group	Examples
Dairy	milk (skim or 1 %), low-fat and fat-free yogurts, low-fat and fat-free cheeses
Meats/Beans	sardines/salmon with bones, calcium-set tofu
Fruits/Vegetables	collard greens, broccoli, calcium-fortified orange juice
Grains	pancakes, calcium-fortified breads and cereals
Combination Foods	cheese pizza (made with reduced-fat cheese), soups prepared with skim milk
Non-food sources	calcium supplements

CALCIUM SUPPLEMENTS:

It is not difficult to make low fat food choices that are good sources of calcium. Although food is the pre-ferred source of calcium, a supplement may be necessary to help you meet your daily calcium needs. Avoid oyster shell, dolomite and bone meal supplements -- because they can contain significant amounts of lead and are absorbed less efficiently than calcium carbonate. Calcium carbonate comes in a chewable form and is marketed by a number of different companies.

BEST FOOD SOURCES OF CALCIUM

DAIRY SOURCES:

Food	Serving Size	Calcium (mg)
Milk, skim	8 oz.	302
Milk, 2%	8 oz.	297
Yogurt, low-fat fruit	8 oz.	350
Yogurt, plain	8 oz.	450
Yogurt, frozen	8 oz.	278
Cheese, American	1 oz.	202
Cheese, low-fat cottage	4 oz./1/2 cup	69
Cheese, cream	1 oz.	30
Cheese, cheddar	1 oz.	204
Cheese, mozzarella	1 oz.	203
Cheese, swiss	1 oz.	273
*Custard, baked	4 oz./1/2 cup	149
Ice cream, low-fat	4 oz./1/2 cup	100
Ice cream sundae	4 oz./1/2 cup	150
Pudding	4 oz./1/2 cup	150
Gise'	4 oz./1/2 cup	150

NON-DAIRY SOURCES:

Food	Serving Size	Calcium (mg)
Broccoli, cooked	4 oz./1/2 cup	47
Spinach, cooked*	4 oz./1/2 cup	122
Greens, cooked	4 oz./1/2 cup	55
Tofu, raw, firm	4 oz./1/2 cup	258
Orange juice, calcium-fortified	6 oz.	200
Instant Oatmeal	1 package	150
Pancakes, buttermilk	1	80
Sardines	2	90
Salmon, canned, with bones	3 oz.	203
Calcium-enriched bread	3 oz.	290
Tomato soup, prepared with milk	8 oz.	186

*contains substances that tend to block calcium absorption

SUGGESTIONS:

- Drink skim or 1% milk with meals or as a snack.
- Increase your intake of calcium-rich foods when under stress.
- Ask your doctor about your medications (some decrease calcium absorption).
- Don't smoke -- it decreases calcium absorption.
- Do exercise -- it increases bone density (especially weight-bearing exercise).
- Use skim milk in soup instead of water.
- Limit caffeine intake, it can decrease calcium absorption.
- Add low-fat cheese to sandwiches, salads, casseroles, etc.

- Eat low-fat yogurt or cheese as a snack.
- Choose calcium-rich desserts.
- Avoid or limit alcohol -- it can increase calcium loss.