

Calcium and Vitamin D

For a Lifetime of Strong, Healthy Bones

Bones perform a variety of functions in the body. Bones provide structure, protect vital organs and store calcium. Adequate calcium and vitamin D are essential to optimize bone health. Calcium plays an important role in maintaining bone, while vitamin D is necessary for the body to absorb calcium. It is important to include both in your diet and the amount you need varies by age.

How much calcium and vitamin D do you need?

If you are age...	You need this much calcium every day in milligrams (mg)	You need this much vitamin D every day in International Units (IU)
19–50	1,000 mg	400 IU
Over 51	1,200 mg	400–800 IU *

(*400 IU is recommended for individuals ages 51 to 70, and 600 IU for those over 70. Some experts believe that for those over 70, increasing vitamin D supplementation up to 800 IU per day can further increase calcium absorption. *The Medical Letter*, Vol. 42 (Issue 1075) April 3, 2000)

Be aware that adults should have no more than 2,500 mg of calcium and 2,000 IU of vitamin D a day through food and supplements. Calcium is absorbed best by the body when it is taken in amounts of 500 mg or less at different times of the day.

Sources of calcium

Calcium is found in a wide variety of foods, including dairy products, vegetables and beans. Many foods like cereals, juices and breads have calcium added to them. When eating packaged foods, read the nutrition label to determine how much calcium the food contains. A list of calcium-rich foods is included on page 2.

Eating a well-balanced diet is a good way to get calcium, but some people may not get an adequate amount of calcium from food alone. Consider taking supplements like calcium tablets with vitamin D or even antacids with calcium. If you have kidney stones, talk to your doctor before taking any supplements.

A well-balanced diet alone may not provide you with the calcium you need. Supplements can make up the difference.

Getting enough calcium while maintaining a heart healthy diet

Milk and other dairy products are excellent sources of calcium. However, some dairy products are also high in saturated fat. Saturated fats can raise the level of cholesterol in your blood and increase your risk for heart disease. When choosing foods that are high in calcium, be sure to check the nutritional label to determine the amount of saturated fat in the food. Saturated fat intake should be limited to 7–10% of your daily calories. When converted to grams, this means that you should have no more than 17–22 grams of saturated fat a day, based on a 2,000 calorie diet. The list of calcium-rich foods on page 2 also includes the amount of saturated fat, in grams, in each serving.

Calcium-rich foods

Food	Serving Size	Calcium (mg)	Saturated fat (g)
Dairy			
Cheese, American	2 oz.	350	12
Cheese, cheddar, low-fat	1 oz.	120	1
Cheese, cheddar	1 oz.	205	6
Cheese, mozzarella, part-skim	1 oz.	185	3
Cheese, ricotta, part-skim	1/2 cup	340	6
Cottage cheese, low-fat, 1%	1/2 cup	70	1
Ice cream, soft serve, light	1/2 cup	120	3
Milk, low-fat, 1%	1 cup	300	2
Milk, skim	1 cup	300	0
Soy milk, calcium added	1 cup	250–300	0
Yogurt, plain, fat-free	1 cup	450	0
Yogurt with fruit, low-fat	1 cup	315	1
Fish			
Salmon, canned with bones	3 oz.	200	2
Sardines, Atlantic, canned with bones	3 oz.	325	1
Fruit, juice, and vegetables			
Bok choy, cooked or fresh	1/2 cup	80	0
Broccoli, cooked or fresh	1 cup	90	0
Calcium fortified orange juice (some brands also have vitamin D added)	1 cup	300	0
Dried figs	10	270	0
Kale, cooked	1/2 cup	45	0
Turnip greens	1/2 cup	100	0
Nuts, seeds, beans, and tofu			
Cooked dried white beans	1 oz.	160	0
Dry roasted almonds	1 oz.	80	1
Garbanzo beans	1 cup	80	0
Soybeans, cooked	1/2 cup	90	1
Tofu made with calcium	1/2 cup	260	1
Other foods			
Burrito with beans and cheese	2 burritos	215	7
Bread, white or whole wheat	1 slice	30	0
Cheese pizza	1 slice	220	3
Corn tortillas (lime treated)	3	130	0
Macaroni and cheese	1/2 cup	180	6
Nachos with cheese	6–8 nachos	270–300	7–9

Calcium content in many foods varies depending on ingredients. Check your food labels to get exact content.

Sources of vitamin D

Vitamin D is found in some types of fish and is also added to foods such as milk, cereals and some juices (see list below). Dietary sources of vitamin D are limited, so it is difficult to get enough of this important vitamin from food alone. Supplements like multivitamins or calcium tablets with vitamin D can make up the difference. A typical multivitamin provides 160–400 mg of calcium and 400 IU of vitamin D.

Vitamin D-rich foods

Food	Serving Size	Vitamin D (IU)
Dairy		
Milk, skim, low-fat	1 cup	100 IU
Fish		
Salmon, canned with bones	3 oz.	425 IU
Sardines, Atlantic, canned with bones	3 oz.	255 IU
Other foods		
Fortified rice beverage	1 cup	100 IU
Fortified soy beverage	1 cup	100 IU
Fortified cereal	1/2–1 cup	40 IU

Suggestions for adding calcium to your diet

- Cook cereals with skim milk or 1% milk (not water), or add 2 table-
spoons non-fat dry milk.
- Add low-fat cheeses to sandwiches, salads, and pizzas.
- Choose calcium-rich snacks, such as low-fat yogurt or low-fat cheeses.
- Add sardines to salads or sandwiches
- Use low-fat cheese on bread or toast instead of butter or margarine.



