

NUTRITION MATTERS

CALCIUM THE NON-DAIRY WAY

There are many reasons why people choose non-dairy sources of calcium. Whatever the reason, it is important to make sure you get enough calcium from other sources.

THE FACTS ABOUT CALCIUM

Calcium is an important nutrient that helps build and keep your bones and teeth healthy. It also helps our muscles and nerve tissue work properly. When we do not get enough calcium from our food, it is taken from our bones and as a result, our bones may become weaker.

As we get older, the risk of developing osteoporosis increases. Osteoporosis is a slow weakening of the bones, making them break more easily. Osteoporosis affects both women and men. Eating foods high in calcium every day will help make sure that our bones get the calcium they need to stay strong and healthy.

Research has shown that calcium may also help prevent certain types of cancer and help control blood pressure.

HOW MUCH CALCIUM DO WE NEED?

The amount of calcium we need changes throughout life. The highest needs are during stages of growth and development like the teenage years. More calcium is also needed after age 50.

Life Stage	Age (years)	Calcium mg/day
Preschooler	1-3	700
Child	4-8	1000
Youth	9-18	1300
Adult	19-50	1000
Adult Women	51-70	1200
Adult Men	51-70	1000
Adult	70+	1200

WHAT AFFECTS CALCIUM ABSORPTION

Vitamin D helps our bodies absorb and store calcium. There are only a few good food sources of vitamin D.

In Canada, vitamin D is found in small amounts in liver, fish and egg yolks.

Food companies are allowed to add (fortify) vitamin D to certain foods, including:

- Breakfast cereals
- Yogurt
- Juice
- Milk
- Margarine

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If you are over the age of 50 or have a child less than 24 months of age, who is breastfed or receiving breastmilk, a vitamin D supplement of 400 International Units daily is recommended

Physical Activity along with a diet with adequate calcium and Vitamin D helps to build strong bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Sodium – A diet that has more than 2300 mg of sodium (salt) a day may cause bone loss.

Caffeine (more than 4 cups of coffee a day or 400 mg of caffeine) may result in bone loss, especially if you do not get enough calcium.

CALCIUM IN FOOD

One cup (250 mL) of cow’s milk has 322 mg of calcium. Calcium-fortified soy, rice, and almond beverages and calcium-fortified orange juice contain about 315 mg of calcium per cup.

Food/Beverage	Serving size	Calcium (mg)
Firm tofu, prepared with calcium sulphate	¾ cup (150 g)	400
Sardines, canned with bones	2.5 oz (75 g)	179
Salmon, canned	2.5 oz (75 g)	148
Almonds	¼ cup (25 nuts)	87
Bok choy, boiled	½ cup (125 mL)	84
Baked beans	½ cup (125 mL)	82-46
Chia seeds	1 tbsp (15 mL)	68
Kale, cooked	½ cup (125 mL)	49
Broccoli, boiled	½ cup (125 mL)	33
Figs, dried	2 medium	27

Adapted from Canadian Nutrient File, 2015.

TO SUPPLEMENT OR NOT

If you think you do not get the calcium you need from food, you may have to take calcium in another way (supplement). For help in choosing a calcium supplement ask your doctor, pharmacist or registered dietitian.

When choosing a supplement, consider:

- Calcium carbonate and calcium citrate are two of the most common forms of calcium.
- It doesn’t matter what brand you purchase or whether you buy calcium carbonate or calcium citrate. Look on the label for the amount of ‘elemental calcium’, which is the amount of calcium your body would use.
- To improve how your body absorbs calcium, take half of your calcium supplement in the morning and the other half in the evening.
- Avoid supplements that contain bone meal, fossil shell, oyster shell or dolomite. These may also contain lead, which can be toxic.

CALCIUM RICH RECIPE - SOY SMOOTHIE RECIPE

- 1 cup frozen fruit (e.g., berries, bananas, mangoes)
- ¼ cup calcium-fortified orange juice
- 1 cup calcium-fortified soy beverage

Place all ingredients in the blender. Blend until smooth and enjoy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about healthy eating, calcium or to find recipe ideas see unlockfood.ca

To speak with a registered dietitian call Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-000.

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