

Calcium-Rich Diet

Information about Calcium

- Calcium is a mineral that helps you build and maintain strong bones and teeth. It is also important for muscle and nerve function, blood clotting, controlling blood pressure and a normal heartbeat.
- The body does not make calcium so you need to get it from your diet.
- Your bones act as a calcium 'bank'. When your diet is rich in calcium, you make 'deposits' in your bones. If you do not eat enough calcium rich foods, your body will begin to 'withdraw' calcium stored in your bones.
- Good calcium intake throughout your life can help to prevent thinning of bones, known as osteoporosis. Thin or weak bones are much easier to break, therefore increasing your risk of fractures and falls.

How Much Calcium Should I Aim For?

Age in Years	Aim for an intake of milligrams, mg / day *	Stay below mg/day *
Infants and Toddlers 1-3	500	3000
Children 4-8	1000	3000
Adolescents 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 Women		
14-18 years	1300	3000
19 and older	1000	2500

*This includes calcium from food and supplements

Calcium Supplements

- The best way to get nutrients, including calcium, is through foods. However, some people may require supplements if they are unable to consume enough calcium-rich foods or they have increased calcium requirements.
- Contact your doctor or dietitian if you think you may require a calcium supplement.

Calcium Content of Common Foods

Food	Serving Size	Calcium (milligrams)
Milk and Dairy products		
Milk, skim, 1%, 2% or 3.3%	250 mL (1 cup)	300
Powdered milk	4 tbsp (makes 250 mL milk)	300
Cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, goat)	50 g (1.5 oz)	400-500
Cottage Cheese	250 mL (1 cup)	150-200
Ricotta Cheese	125 mL (½ cup)	275-350
Plain yogurt	175 g (¾ cup)	300-325
Kefir (fermented milk drink)	175 g (¾ cup)	175
Non-dairy, Calcium Fortified Beverages		
Soy beverage, fortified with calcium	250 mL (1 cup)	300
Rice beverage, fortified with calcium	250 mL (1 cup)	300
Orange juice, fortified with calcium	250 mL (1 cup)	300
Vegetables		
Spinach, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	150
Kale, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	100
Collard Greens, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	200
Turnip Greens, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	130
Protein Foods		
Salmon, canned, with bones	75 g (2 ½ oz)	175-200
Sardines, canned, with bones	75 g (2 ½ oz)	275
Anchovies, canned	75 g (2 ½ oz)	175
Beans, canned or cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	100-140
Tahini/Sesame seed butter	30 mL (2 Tbsp)	130
Almonds, dry roasted	60 mL (¼ cup)	100
Whole Grains		
This food group contains very little calcium. Read food labels for calcium content.		

*Other foods like green vegetables, nuts and some fruit also contain calcium but are not considered high sources.

Increasing Your Calcium Intake with Food:

- Drink milk (skim, 1%, 2%) with meals and snacks each day.
- Have yogurt or cottage cheese for breakfast, as a snack or dessert.
- Make oatmeal, cream of wheat or pancakes, with milk.
- Make a smoothie with yogurt and milk as a base.
- Use yogurt as a dip, garnish, spread or dressing.
- Add cheese to omelettes and scrambled eggs.
- Top casseroles, pastas, vegetables, salads and sandwiches with cheese.
- Make soups with milk instead of water.
- 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 so shake these beverages well before pouring.
- Grab a handful of almonds as a snack. Sprinkle almonds on top of salads or oatmeal.
- Use canned salmon or tuna in casseroles, sandwiches or salads.
- Include beans in soups, salads and casseroles.
- Cook a stir-fry with kale, spinach, collard or turnip greens.



Reading Food Labels:

- Read the Nutrition Facts table on packaged foods to see calcium content.
- You will find the Nutrition Facts table on the side of most packaged food products.
- Look for the Percent Daily Value (%DV) on the right-hand side of the table. This tells you whether a food has 'a little' or 'a lot' of a given nutrient.
- Choose products with 15% Daily Value or more calcium. This is considered 'a lot'.
- Less than 5% Daily Value calcium is considered 'a little'.
- 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.
 - 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 also very important in maintaining strong bones. Vitamin D helps calcium to be absorbed in your body. Most of our vitamin D needs can be met from sun exposure, but this is not always possible in Canada due to the climate. Getting enough Vitamin D through food sources is especially important during the winter months when sun exposure is low.
- Common food sources of vitamin D include fish (salmon, trout, whitefish, mackerel and herring), eggs, fortified soy milk and cow's milk. Vitamin D is added to all cow's milk in Canada.
- A vitamin D supplement is often recommended during the winter months.
- Talk to a dietitian if you are unsure if you are getting enough vitamin D.

Lactose Intolerance or Milk Allergy

- You may find it more challenging to meet calcium needs if you are lactose intolerant or have a milk allergy.
- Talk to a dietitian if you are unsure if you are getting enough calcium through non-dairy products.

Registered Dietitian: _____

905-378-4647 ext. _____