



CALCIUM

What Does Calcium Do?

Calcium is a mineral that our bodies need to build and maintain strong bones and teeth throughout life. As we age, eating high-calcium foods and doing weight-bearing exercise regularly can help slow the loss of bone. Calcium also helps blood clot and keeps muscles and nerves working properly. It may help reduce blood pressure and the risk of some forms of cancer.

How Much Calcium Do You Need?

From an early age, calcium is important:

- ▶ Calcium needs increase in young children from 500 milligrams (mg) each day for 1- to 3-year-olds to 800 mg for 4- to 8-year-olds.
- ▶ Older children and teens need the most calcium because nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of all bone forms during the teen years. Between 9- and 18-years-old, healthy kids and adolescents should get 1,300 mg calcium each day.
- ▶ Girls between 14- and 18-years-old should aim for 1,300 mg of calcium daily, especially if pregnant or breastfeeding.
- ▶ Women between 19- and 50-years-old benefit from 1,000 mg of calcium per day, even during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.
- ▶ Healthy males between 19- and 70-years-old should aim for 1,000 mg calcium daily.
- ▶ Older adults need more calcium because bones lose calcium as we age. Women over 50-years-old and men over 70-years-old should aim for 1,200 mg of calcium daily.

Tips for Getting More Calcium

- ▶ Include foods from the MyPlate Dairy Group daily. Aim for 3 servings of fat-free or low-fat dairy foods (milk, yogurt, or cheese) and/or calcium-fortified soy milk each day.
- ▶ Make oatmeal or hot chocolate with fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk instead of water.

(continued)

IF YOU ARE LACTOSE INTOLERANT

People with lactose intolerance are unable to fully digest the natural sugar (lactose) in milk. Milk and dairy foods may cause gas, bloating, or diarrhea if you are lactose intolerant. Still, you may not need to completely avoid milk products. Try these tips:

- ▶ Have smaller servings of milk products.
 - ▶ Drink milk with meals rather than by itself.
 - ▶ Try yogurt and hard cheeses. These have less lactose than milk and may be easier to digest.
 - ▶ Try lactose-reduced milk products.
 - ▶ Ask your health care team about taking lactase enzyme tablets. They may help you digest lactose.
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PLANT-BASED CALCIUM TIPS

- ▶ Look for calcium-fortified foods, such as some juices, bread, cereal, and tofu (check the labels).
- ▶ Enjoy cooked greens, such as spinach, kale, and turnip greens as a vegetable side.
- ▶ Sprinkle sliced almonds and chia seeds over salad or coleslaw.
- ▶ Fill a corn tortilla with tofu cubes, beans, and salsa.

(from previous)

- ▶ Top breakfast cereal with low-fat or fat-free fruit yogurt.
- ▶ Make a vegetable dip by blending plain low-fat or fat-free yogurt with herbs. For a fresh fruit dip, replace herbs with honey and cinnamon.
- ▶ Keep calcium-rich snacks on hand, such as string cheese, fat-free or low-fat pudding and yogurt cups, or single-serve cartons of chocolate milk.
- ▶ Toss pasta and vegetables with a sauce made with fat-free or low-fat ricotta cheese, milk, and fresh herbs.
- ▶ Blend shredded cheese into casseroles and meatloaf or serve it with chili or stews

Which Foods Have Calcium?

Food	Milligrams (mg) per serving
Yogurt, plain, low-fat, 8 ounces	415
Orange juice, calcium fortified, 1 cup	349
Mozzarella, part skim, 1½ ounces	333
Sardines, canned in oil, with bones, 3 ounces	325
Cheddar cheese, 1½ ounces	307
Milk, fat-free(skim), 1 cup*	299
Soy milk, calcium fortified, 1 cup	299
Milk, reduced-fat (2% milk fat), 1 cup*	293
Milk, buttermilk, low-fat, 1 cup*	284
Milk, whole (3.25% milk fat), 1 cup*	276
Yogurt, fruit, low-fat, 6 ounces	258
Tofu, firm, made with calcium sulfate, ½ cup**	253
Salmon, pink, canned, solids with bone, 3 ounces	181
Cottage cheese, 1% milk fat, 1 cup	138
Tofu, soft, made with calcium sulfate, ½ cup**	138
Breakfast cereals, fortified with 10% of the DV for calcium, 1 serving	130

Food	Milligrams (mg) per serving
Frozen yogurt, vanilla, soft serve, ½ cup	103
Turnip greens, fresh, boiled, ½ cup	99
Kale, fresh, cooked, 1 cup	94
Ice cream, vanilla, ½ cup	84
Chia seeds, 1 tablespoon	76
Chinese cabbage (bok choy), raw, shredded, 1 cup	74
Bread, white, 1 slice	73
Tortilla, corn, one, 6-inch diameter	46
Tortilla, flour, one, 6-inch diameter	32
Sour cream, reduced-fat, 2 tablespoons	31
Bread, whole-wheat, 1 slice	30
Kale, raw, chopped, 1 cup	24
Broccoli, raw, ½ cup	21
Cream cheese, regular, 1 tablespoon	14

** Calcium content varies by fat content; dairy foods with more fat contain less calcium.*

*** Calcium content is for tofu processed with a calcium salt.*

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. FoodData Central, 2019.