

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 our bones and teeth healthy. It also helps our muscles 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 ensure our bones get the calcium they need to stay strong and healthy.

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. Calcium is an important nutrient for all life stages; however more calcium is also needed as we get older.

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
Older 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 fatty fish and egg yolks. Food companies are allowed to add (fortify) vitamin D to certain foods, including:

- Milk
- Yogurt (made with Vitamin D fortified milk)
- Some orange juices
- Soy, rice, oat or almond beverages
- Margarine

If you 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.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675
TTY 1-866-512-6228
york.ca/nutrition

The logo for York Region, featuring a stylized bird or wing icon above the text "York Region".

Physical Activity - Along with a diet with adequate calcium and Vitamin D, physical activity 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) can decrease the amount of calcium your body stores.

CALCIUM IN FOOD

For comparison, one cup (250 mL) of cow's milk has 322 mg of calcium.

Food/Beverage	Serving size	Calcium (mg)
Fortified soy beverage	1 cup (250 mL)	316
Fortified almond beverage	1 cup (250 mL)	312
Fortified rice beverage	1 cup (250 mL)	319
Firm tofu, prepared with calcium sulphate	¾ cup (150 g)	302-525
Sardines, canned with bones	2.5 oz (75 g)	286
Blackstrap molasses	1 tbsp. (15 mL)	179
Salmon, canned with bones	2.5 oz (75 g)	179
White beans	½ cup (125 mL)	101-85
Soy yogurt	½ cup (125 mL)	89-17
Almonds	25 nuts	86
Bok choy, boiled	½ cup (125 mL)	84
Baked beans	½ cup (125 mL)	82-46
Chia seeds	1 tbsp (15 mL)	68
Navy beans	½ cup (125 mL)	65
Black beans	½ cup (125 mL)	54-44
Kale, cooked	½ cup (125 mL)	49
Broccoli, boiled	½ cup (125 mL)	33
Figs, dried	2 medium	27

Adapted from Canadian Nutrient File, 2019.

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. Before taking any supplement always speak to your health care provider.

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. Ensure the product has a Drug Identification Number (DIN)
- Calcium carbonate is absorbed best when taken with food. Calcium citrate can be taken any time
- To improve how your body absorbs calcium, take half of your calcium supplement in the morning and the other half in the evening
- Look on the label for the amount of 'elemental calcium', which is the amount of calcium your body would use

CALCIUM RICH RECIPE - SOY SMOOTHIE RECIPE

- 1 cup frozen strawberries
- ½ a banana
- ⅓ cup silken tofu (prepared with calcium sulphate)
- 1 cup calcium-fortified, unsweetened soy beverage

Place all ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth and enjoy. This recipe contains about 375 mg of calcium.

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 1-866-797-0000.

May be reproduced without permission provided source is acknowledged. 2019.