

The importance of calcium-rich foods

Why you need calcium in your diet

Everyone needs calcium for healthy bones and to help keep their muscles, blood vessels, and nervous system working well. Most of the calcium you eat is stored in your bones to keep them strong.

How much do you need?

Most adults 19 years of age and older should get 1000 mg of calcium every day. Women aged 51 or older need 1200 mg every day.

How to include calcium in your diet

Milk, yogurt, and cheese are rich sources of calcium. Many people can get some or most of the calcium they need by eating some of these foods every day.

Nondairy sources of calcium include dark green vegetables such as spinach; kale; and collard, mustard, and turnip greens. Many foods are fortified with added calcium, including dry breakfast cereals and orange juice. Check the label to find out how much calcium a food contains.

If you're lactose-intolerant, try one of the many dairy foods made for people who cannot digest dairy products. Many types of milk, cheese, cottage cheese, and yogurt are specially labeled for lactose intolerance. They have as much calcium as the regular versions.

Based on a daily requirement of 1000 mg of calcium, the following table shows the calcium content of common foods.

Dairy food sources	Calcium per serving (mg)	Percentage of daily requirement
Low-fat yogurt, 8 oz	415	42%
Mozzarella, part skim, 1.5 oz	333	33%
Cheddar cheese, 1.5 oz	306	31%
Nonfat or reduced fat (2% milk fat) milk, 8 oz	296	30%
Whole milk (3.25% milk fat), 8 oz	272	27%
Cheddar cheese, low-fat, 1.5 oz	180	18%
Cottage cheese, 1% fat, 1 cup	138	14%
Frozen vanilla yogurt, soft-serve, ½ cup	103	10%

Nondairy food sources	Calcium per serving (mg)	Percentage of daily requirement
Ready-to-eat cereal, calcium-fortified, 1 cup	100–1000	10%–100%
Soy beverage, calcium-fortified, 8 oz	80–500	8%–50%
Orange juice, calcium-fortified, 6 oz	378	38%
Sardines, canned in oil, with bones, 3 oz	324	32%
Tofu, firm, made with calcium sulfate, ½ cup	253	25%
Turnip greens, boiled, ½ cup	99	10%
Kale, cooked, 1 cup	94	9%
Chinese cabbage, raw, 1 cup	74	7%
Tortilla, flour, 6" diameter	39	4%
Broccoli, raw, ½ cup	21	2%

Calcium nutritional supplements

It's best to get calcium from the foods you eat. But if you are not able to get enough calcium from your diet, your healthcare provider may recommend a calcium supplement.

- Calcium supplements may interfere with certain medicines you may be taking
- Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium from the foods you eat or supplements you take. You can get vitamin D when you're outdoors and your skin is exposed to sunlight, from foods, and from multivitamins.
- Talk with your provider before adding a calcium supplement to your diet

Talk to your healthcare provider about the importance of calcium. Ask how to make sure you get as much calcium as your body needs.