

Nutrition and Dietetics

Dietary advice to increase your Calcium intake

Why is calcium important

Calcium is a mineral that is needed to maintain strong bones. It is also needed for healthy muscle and nerve function. A diet rich in calcium is important for keeping bones and teeth strong and to reduce the risk of osteoporosis (where bones become 'thin' and fragile).

Requirements

Group	Age (years)	Calcium (mg) per day
Infants	Under 1	525
Children	1-3	350
	4-6	450
	7-10	550
Adolescents	11-18 females	800
	11-18 males	1000
Adults	19+	700
Those who are breastfeeding		1250
Coeliac disease	19+	1000-1500
Coeliac disease (post-menopausal women and elderly men)		1200-1500
Osteoporosis	19+	1000
Inflammatory Bowel Disease	19+	1000-1500
Inflammatory Bowel Disease (whilst taking corticosteroids)	19+	1500

Good sources of calcium

Dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt and cheese are good sources of calcium. Non-dairy sources of calcium include fortified bread, fortified cereal, dried fruits, nuts, beans and green vegetables.

Plant-based/vegan diets

If you are following a gluten free and vegan diet, plant-based milk that is enriched with calcium is a good alternative to cow's milk. Also, try to include a range of plant-based calcium sources like plant-based yoghurts, plant-based cheese, green vegetables, beans and figs.

Many plant-based alternatives to dairy products in the UK are fortified with calcium (they have extra calcium added to them). Calcium-set tofu and calcium-fortified bread are good options to include as your main sources of calcium.

It is important to check that the products you are buying contain added calcium as many organic products are not fortified. Without added calcium, these foods and drinks do not have a noticeable amount of calcium.

Note that most plant-based alternatives to dairy, like rice, oat or nut drinks, contain less protein and calories than cow's milk.

Calcium contents of food (please check labels as calcium content may vary with brand)

Milk and Milk products:	Average serving	mg
Rice pudding	200g	200
Cheese low fat (hard)	30g	250
Milk skimmed	200ml	240
Milk semi-skimmed	200ml	240
Milk whole	200ml	240
Cheddar cheese	30g	220
Custard from powder	140g	196
Custard pot	125g	133
Skimmed milk powder	15g	190
Yoghurt - low fat fruit	125g	175
Yoghurt - fruit	125g	153
Cheese spread - 2 triangles	30g	149
Cottage cheese	90g	110
Ice cream	1 scoop	60
Soya milk calcium-enriched	200ml	240
Soya milk	200ml	25
Ice cream non-dairy	1 scoop	45
Alpro soya custard	100g	120
Alpro soya yoghurt	100g	120

Milk substitute	Average serving	mg
Coconut	200ml	240
Soya	200ml	240
Almond	200ml	240
Oat	200ml	240
Hazelnut (Alpro)	200ml	240
Rice	200ml	240
Hemp	200ml	240

Cereal Products - All Cereal Dry	Average serving	mg
Warburtons Milk Roll	1 slice	29
Hovis Best of Both	1 slice	179
Warburtons gluten free multi-seed loaf bread	1 slice	173
Ready Brek	30g	402
Muesli	30g	78
Fruit and fibre cereal	30g	47
Cheerios	30g	161

Meat, Fish and Alternatives	Average serving	mg
Sardines including bones (tinned)	100g	400
Pilchards	100g	250
Tofu (soya bean curd)	50g	75-250
Tinned salmon	100g	80
Baked beans	150g	80
Kidney beans	100g	70
Sesame seeds / Tahini	10g	67
Almonds	25g	60
Chick peas	100g	46
Brazil nuts	25g	45
Hazelnuts	25g	35
Egg -1	50g	30
Peanuts	40g	24

Fruit and Vegetables	Average serving	mg
Figs, dried - 3	75g	180
Orange - 1	150g	75
Apricot, dried - 4	30g	25
Currants - 1 tablespoon	25g	25
Okra stir-fried	100g	220
Spinach, boiled	100g	160
Curly kale	100g	150
Watercress	60g	100
Spring greens, boiled	100g	75
Broccoli, boiled	100g	40

Miscellaneous	Average serving	mg
Ovaltine powder (dry)	25g	204
Horlicks powder (dry)	25g	478
Horlicks light malt instant powder (dry)	32g	598
Ovaltine chocolate light powder (dry)	20g	200
Horlicks light instant chocolate powder (dry)	32g	908
Hot chocolate light powder (dry)	20g	200
Cinammon, ground - 1 teaspoon	3g	37
Curry powder - 1 teaspoon	3g	19
Mixed herbs, dried - 1 teaspoon	1g	17
Thyme, dried - 1 teaspoon	1g	19
Sage, dried - 1 teaspoon	1g	17

Calcium absorption

Oxalates and phytates reduce affect calcium absorption. Spinach, dried fruits, beans, seeds and nuts contain calcium but they also contain oxalates and/or phytates which reduce how much calcium your body can absorb from them. You should not rely on them as your main sources of calcium.

Other factors to help build healthy bones

As well as getting enough calcium in your diet, other factors help to keep your bones healthy:

Vitamin D

- Vitamin D helps your body to absorb calcium from foods.
- We get most of our vitamin D from the action of sunlight on our skin (between March/April and September/October).
- We get the rest of our vitamin D from food. for example:
 - liver
 - oily fish (salmon, mackerel and sardines)
 - egg yolks
 - Red meat
 - Fortified foods like some breakfast cereal and fat spreads
- It is advised that **everyone in the UK above the age of one** should take a 10µg vitamin D supplement per day, especially those who:
 - Are not outdoors often (care home or those who are frail/housebound)
 - Wear clothes that cover most of their skin when outdoors
 - Those from ethnic groups with dark skin (African, African-Caribbean or South Asian origin)

Exercise

- Weight-bearing exercise such as walking, dancing, skipping, aerobics, running and resistance training helps to build strong bones, as well as having many other benefits to your health.

Avoid smoking

- Smoking can damage bone-building cells and cause early menopause in women.

Reduce salt intake

- Eating too much salt makes your body lose calcium through your kidneys. Reducing your intake of salt and salty foods will help to reduce calcium losses.

Women who are going through or who have completed the menopause are at greater risk of osteoporosis, where bones become 'thin' and fragile. They need to take special note of all the advice in this leaflet.

You should be able to get all the calcium you need by eating a varied and balanced diet. If you are finding it difficult to meet the calcium requirements from your diet you may need a calcium supplement. If you decide to take calcium supplements it is a good idea not to take too much. It is recommended that the total daily intake of calcium should be less than 2000mg. Discuss this with your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian.

Dietitians:

Calderdale Royal Hospital (01422) 224267

Huddersfield Royal Infirmary (01484) 342749

National Osteoporosis Society www.nos.org.uk

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

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www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

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