

Fact Sheet

(CHS_FS_GNA_031)

CALCIUM

Why Do We Need Calcium?

Calcium is essential for good health. Not only is it important for building and maintaining healthy bones but calcium is also involved with the healthy functioning of muscles, blood and hormones.

- Calcium is a mineral important for strong healthy bones and teeth. Calcium is also involved in helping the muscles to work properly, clotting blood and regulating hormone secretions (including insulin and the activation of enzymes).
- Calcium is stored in the skeleton and is essential for building and maintaining strong healthy bones.
- Peak bone mass, or maximum bone strength, occurs anywhere from the late teens to late twenties. To help achieve peak bone mass it is important to eat enough calcium during childhood and adolescence.

How Much Calcium is Needed?

	Calcium mg/day
Infants	300 – 500
Children < 9 years	800
Boys (9 – 18 years)	1300
Girls (9 – 18 years)	1300
Men and Women (< 51 years)	1000
Men and Women > 51 years	1200
Pregnancy	1200
Lactation	1300

Calcium Content of Some Foods

The body requires calcium every day. If you don't get enough from your diet, it will be taken from the calcium stores in your bones. Dairy foods are the richest source of calcium in the Australian diet.

Food	Amount	Calcium (mg)
MILK		
Whole	200 mls	240 mg
Physical	200 mls	380 mg
Soy Milk	check labels	check labels
CHEESE		
Processed cheddar	1 slice 21 g	132 mg
Cheddar	1 slice 30 g	234 mg
YOGHURT		
Natural	200 g	340 mg
Flavoured	200 g	320 mg
	½ cup	150 mg
OTHER SOURCES		
	½ cup	150 mg
Custard	4 – 5 small	170 mg
White Sauce	½ cup	215 mg
Sardines	80 g	220 mg
Salmon (with the bones)	1 large scoop 50 g	96 mg 65 mg
Tofu		150 mg
Ice Cream		
Chocolate (milk)		



Source: Royal Children's Hospital Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
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Calcium Supplements

Obtaining calcium through a health promoting diet containing calcium-rich foods is preferable to relying on calcium supplements. The lactose found in milk and yoghurt actually enhances calcium absorption, a bonus not found with supplements.

When supplements are necessary, doses should be divided to enhance absorption. For individuals with normal gastric acid production, supplements are best taken one hour after a meal, to avoid interaction of calcium with dietary fibre and salt.

For individuals with low gastric acid production, particularly in the elderly, calcium tablets are best taken with a meal to ensure sufficient acid is present for effective absorption. Soluble calcium tablets (eg. Sandocal) are most readily absorbed.

Commercial Calcium Supplements

Product name	Calcium (mg) Per Tablet
Caltrate	600
Cal-Sup	500
Calvita Osti	600
Sandocal 600	600
Sandocal 1000	1000



References

Calcium and Children, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane
Diary The Food of Life, Dairy Australia 2002

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Fun Ideas to Boost Calcium Intake

- Serve small bowls of chopped fruit with yoghurt on top
- Freeze yoghurt into icypole trays
- Place frozen milk poppers into lunchboxes
- Serve cereal with milk for afternoon tea as an alternative to biscuits or chips
- Place frozen tubs of yoghurt into lunch boxes
- Sprinkle grated cheese over vegetables
- Make fruit smoothies for afternoon tea
- Spread sandwiches with creamed cheese rather than butter or margarine
- Make mini pizzas on muffins and top with grated cheese
- Add cheese or sour cream to mashed potatoes
- Jazz up salads with shredded mozzarella, shaved parmesan or a yoghurt dressing
- Make your own dip by combining 250g ricotta cheese and half a packet of French onion soup mix

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