

Building and Keeping Strong Bones: Calcium Supplements and Vitamin D

If you have a hard time eating enough high calcium foods, supplements are a great way to get the calcium you need. It comes in a number of forms (calcium carbonate, calcium citrate, etc.) The elemental calcium content is what is important. Read the label to find the amount of elemental calcium in each pill. Here are some examples.

Calcium Tablets-Examples

Calcium carbonate

Caltrate 600

Os-Cal 500

Tums 500 (no Vit. D)

Calcium citrate

Citracal, different strengths

Calcium phosphate

Posture-D 600

Calcium Requirements:

1200 mg per day

There are many brands- shop around

The important point is the calcium content

How should I take my calcium?

Calcium is best absorbed if taken in small amounts throughout the day. Ideally, if you are taking more than one calcium tablet per day, take one in the morning and one in the evening.

- Use of manufactured supplements is best. Calcium as bone meal or dolomite may contain lead or other heavy metals as contaminants.
- Calcium supplements should not be taken with high fiber meals or with bulk forming laxatives.
- If using calcium carbonate supplement, take it with meals to assure high stomach acid for maximum absorption. Calcium citrate is the most well absorbed type of calcium.
- Drink plenty of fluids while using supplements to reduce bloating and constipation.

How much Vitamin D should I get?

All vertebrates, including humans, obtain most of their vitamin D from sunlight (UVB). Latitude, season, time of day, and pollution affect production. Dark skin pigmentation, skin aging and sunscreen reduce skin production of vitamin D. Vitamin D deficiency is most common among the elderly but can occur in anyone and you may need to have your level checked. If it is low, you will be asked to take extra D.

Recommended Daily Vitamin D Intake: In the absence of adequate sunlight

Childhood to age 90: 400-800 IU per day

You may be asked to take much higher doses if you are found to be Vitamin D deficient on lab tests Homebound/
Institutionalized Elderly: 800 IU

There is usually vitamin D in a multivitamin and some calcium supplements also include vitamin D- check the label. You should take a combination Calcium/ Vitamin D tablet for the best results.

Reminder: If you are taking a medication for bone loss, you must continue to take Calcium and Vitamin D. The medication **cannot** work without these supplements.

Calcium- are you getting enough?

Age group

Suggested daily calcium intake

Infants

(birth to 6 months)

400 milligrams

(6 months to 1 year)

600 milligrams

Children	
(1 to 5 years)	800 milligrams
(6 to 10 years)	800 to 1,200 milligrams
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Teens and young adults	
(11 to 24 years)	1,200 to 1,500 milligrams
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Adult-Women	
(25 to 50 years)	1,000 milligrams
Adult-Men	
(25 to 65 years)	1,000 milligrams
Postmenopausal women	
On estrogen	1,000 milligrams
Postmenopausal women	
Not on estrogen	1,500 milligrams
Men and Women	
(65 years and older)	1,500 milligrams
Pregnant/ Lactating women	1,200 to 1,500 milligrams
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Calcium – where you’ll find it:

Amount of calcium in milligrams (approx.) intake

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Milk	
Milk (skim), 8 ounces	302
Milk (whole), 8 ounces	291
Low-fat chocolate milk, 8 ounces	287
Buttermilk, 8 ounces	285
Breast milk, 8 ounces	79
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Yogurt	
Nonfat yogurt, 8 ounces	452
Low-fat yogurt, 8 ounces	415
Low-fat yogurt with fruit, 8 ounces	314
Frozen yogurt, ½ cup	90
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Cheese	
Goat cheese (hard), 1 ounce	254
Part-skim mozzarella, 1 ounce	183
American cheese, 1 ounce	174
Low-fat cottage cheese, 1 cup	155
Feta cheese, 1 ounce	140
Grated Parmesan cheese, tablespoon	69
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Fish	
Sardines with bones, 3 ounces	370
Canned salmon with bones, 3 ounces	180
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Vegetables	
Collards (frozen, chopped), 1 cup	357
Turnip greens (cooked, frozen), 1 cup	200
Kale (frozen, chopped), 1 cup	179
Broccoli (cooked), 1 cup	178
Okra (cooked), 1 cup	176
Dandelion greens (chopped, cooked), 1 cup	147
Mustard greens (chopped, cooked), 1 cup	103
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Other	

Vegetable lasagna, 1 piece	450
Calcium-fortified orange juice, 1 cup	300
Cheese pizza, 1 slice	290
Chocolate pudding, ½ cup	161
Rice pudding, ½ cup	152
Vanilla soft-serve ice cream, ½ cup	113
Chocolate soft-serve ice cream, ½ cup	106
Vanilla ice cream, ½ cup	85