

Calcium and Health

Children and teenagers' bones are growing every day, more than at any other time in their lives. When teens reach their adult height, bones continue to grow strong and denser into adulthood. Growing bones need lots of the mineral calcium. Unfortunately, studies show that most children don't get the calcium they need. More than half of teenage boys and girls don't get the recommended amount of calcium. This puts them at great risk for developing the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis. Calcium also helps keep teeth and gums strong and healthy. Muscles and nerves also need adequate calcium to function well.

Age	Calcium needed each day	Recommended * servings per day (1/2 cup each)
1-3 years	500 mg	3-4
4-8 years	800 mg	2-3
9-18 years	1,300 mg	3-4
19-50 years	1,000 mg	3

* 1 serving = 300 mg of calcium per day or 1 cup milk

Calcium in food			
1 cup milk	300 mg	1 cup Broccoli, cooked	90 mg
2 oz. Cheese	350 mg	½ cup Soybeans	90 mg
1 cup Yogurt	315 mg	½ cup Bok Choy	80 mg
1 slice Pizza	220 mg	3 Corn Tortilla	135 mg
½ cup Macaroni & Cheese (box mix)	50 mg	Almonds, roasted, 1oz	80 mg
1 cup Soy Milk (Calcium Fortified)	300 mg	1 cup Orange Juice (with added calcium)	300 mg

Here are some things that can be done to help all ages stay healthy

- **Offer children** healthy foods filled with calcium, such as dairy products, and dark green, leafy vegetables.
- **Consume** adequate calcium daily.
- **Keep milk, low fat dairy products, and foods with calcium in the house...**and put milk on the table during meals and snacks.
- **Drink milk yourself** and make it part of your family's diet. Children learn to make many food choices by watching their parents, so show them milk and calcium are important.
- **If you are watching calories**, choose fat free dairy foods: one eight ounce serving of fat-free milk = 86 calories, almost no fat and 300 mg. calcium.
- **Get involved in regular weight-bearing activities**, such as dancing, soccer, running, weight lifting, and volleyball. These activities trigger bone tissue to form.

- **Go easy on soft drinks** if they edge out calcium-rich milk. It appears soft drinks interfere with the work calcium does to make strong bones.
- **Avoid smoking.** It also may have a negative effect on bone formation.
- **Look for dairy products fortified with vitamin D.** Vitamin D helps the body to absorb more calcium. Sunlight is also a good source of Vitamin D.

Source: “Milk Matters for your Child’s Health!” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: National Institutes of Health. May 2000; OCHD Nutrition Services May 2004.



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