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THE BENEFITS OF CALCIUM

Calcium is a vital part of your diet that helps keep your body strong. Your bones and teeth in particular depend on calcium, but so do your heart and other muscles as well as your nerves.

Adults should consume about 1000 mg of calcium per day.

Eating foods that are high naturally high in calcium gives your body what it needs to perform properly and any excess is stored in your bones.

That's why if you don't have enough calcium in your diet, the strength of your bones suffer. Your body will use that stored calcium when your diet is lacking in it and that reduces your overall bone mass, which makes your bones weaker and more prone to injury.

Health Canada recommends adults between the ages of 19 and 50 consume about 1000 mg of calcium per day.



While we all know that dairy products are naturally very calcium rich, there are many other foods you can eat to ensure you're getting the calcium your body needs.

This is especially important for those who follow a vegan lifestyle or have issues with dairy intolerance.

A standard serving (250 ml) of cow's or goat's

milk, fortified soy or rice beverages, fortified orange juice, or evaporated milk, 50 grams of cheese (such as brick, cheddar, swiss or gouda), 175 ml of plain yogurt and 100 grams of tofu (set with calcium) – all contain more than 300 mg of calcium.

Other yogurt products, canned sardines or salmon (with bones), and mozzarella cheese provide between 200 and 300 mg of calcium per serving.

Things like almonds, baked beans, navy beans, powdered milk, bok choy, broccoli, oranges, kale, cottage cheese, ice cream all provide between 50 and 200 mg per serving.



The Osteoporosis Canada website, at www.osteoporosis.ca, has a calcium calculator to help you figure out whether you're getting enough calcium from your diet. Simply input how many servings of each of the listed items you consume per day, and it will tabulate your total.

If you're not getting calcium from your diet for reasons such as lactose intolerance, allergies, or because you're vegan, supplements can help.

The two main types of calcium supplements are calcium carbonate and calcium citrate.

Did you know?

If you have a shellfish allergy, be careful about the calcium supplement you choose. Some are derived from coral or oyster.

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Consult with your pharmacist to be sure the supplements you take meet your needs. Some sources of calcium can contain lead and some sources may lead to allergic reactions.



- Do not take a dose of more than 500-600 mg of calcium at a time.
- Do not take iron and calcium supplements at the same time as calcium can affect your body's ability to absorb iron.

And don't forget that Vitamin D is important for your body too for many reasons, and in particular because it helps your body absorb calcium.

We get Vitamin D from the sun mostly as it is not found in many foods. Some foods that DO contain Vitamin D are cow's milk, fortified soy and rice drinks, fortified orange juice, salmon, sardines, margarine, egg yolks and fortified yogurt.

Many calcium supplements also contain Vitamin D to ensure your body gets what it needs to benefit the most from the calcium.

Eat Right Ontario, run by the Dieticians of Canada, has an excellent website with resources on healthy eating. In addition, there is a toll free line where you can speak to a Registered Dietician.

Call a Dietician at Eat Right Ontario at 1-877-510-510-2 if you have questions about healthy eating. The line is open Monday - Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and to 9 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Things to consider:

- Amount of elemental calcium per tablet/dose.
- Type: Chewable, liquid or pill.
- Does the supplement you take cause side effects like upset stomach, nausea or constipation? Speak to your pharmacist about alternatives or other brands.
- Drink enough water when you take your supplement to aid with swallowing.
- Calcium carbonate supplements are absorbed best with food.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.eatrightontario.ca
www.dieticians.ca
www.osteoporosis.ca



published October 2012