

Family Health Centers Nutrition Program

CALCIUM

Calcium is a mineral that is essential for bone growth and development, which is a continual process throughout life. It also has other important roles in the body such as muscle contraction, nerve conduction and blood clotting. Because Vitamin D is needed for the body to absorb calcium, sources of Vitamin D are also included. Other nutrients affect calcium balance and bone growth such as magnesium, phosphorus, boron and vitamin K.

FOODS RICH IN CALCIUM

DAIRY:

cheese
ice cream, ice milk, sherbet
yogurt
milk

VEGETABLES:

Broccoli
Parsley
sweet potato
greens - chard, kale, collards, mustard,
turnips, spinach

FRUITS:

dried figs
Valencia oranges
calcium - fortified juices

LEGUMES, NUTS & SEEDS:

chick peas
tofu, processed with calcium
soybeans
fortified soy milk
almonds
sesame seeds
sunflower seeds

SEAFOOD:

sardines, with bones
salmon, with bones
clams
oysters
shrimp
lobster

OTHER:

instant cereals (e.g.- instant oatmeal)
nutritional and Brewer's yeast
blackstrap molasses

VITAMIN D SOURCES

Vitamin D fortified milk
Eggs
Butter
Fish

Vitamin D fortified foods - cereal, bread,
instant breakfast drinks, cream soup,
pudding...
sunlight (sunscreen inhibits the body's
absorption of Vitamin D)

SUPPLEMENTATION

There are several things to keep in mind when choosing a calcium supplement. Be sure it is easily absorbable; USP on the label designates a supplement as being of pure quality and dissolves easily. Avoid calcium supplements from bone meal, dolomite or oyster shell as they may contain toxic metals such as lead, mercury, cadmium or arsenic. Limestone is considered a safe source of calcium carbonate, except for 'limestone' that comprises coral calcium, which contain lead and other heavy metals.

Calcium should be supplemented in a 2:1 ratio with magnesium (eg- 300 mg of Ca to 150 mg of Mg). Choose supplements with lower amounts of calcium (300-500 mg) as they are more fully absorbed than higher amounts; take in divided doses. Recommended amounts per day depend on your age, whether you are male or female, if you are on hormone replacement therapy, dietary intake, risk of osteoporosis, etc. However, in general, those age 19 - 50 should consume 1000 mg of calcium a day and those over 50 should consume 1200 mg of calcium a day. Men should limit calcium to 1500 mg per day to protect the prostate (via food and supplements).

Include Vitamin D in your calcium supplement unless you are getting sufficient amounts in a daily multi-vitamin mineral supplement. Total Vitamin D intake per day from food and supplements should be 400 IU if age 50-70 and 600 to 1000 IU if over age 70. Some calcium supplements also include zinc as a high calcium intake can reduce zinc levels. Take calcium separately from iron as calcium can decrease iron absorption.

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If you would like personal instruction on how to
incorporate nutritional guidelines
into your life and improve your health,
schedule an appointment with:
Karen Youket, Dietitian / Nutritionist
by calling The Family Health Centers at
828-258-8681