



# Calcium and Kids

## Why is calcium so important for children?

Calcium is one of the key factors in building and maintaining strong bones. Children actually build the foundation for a lifetime of strong bones during their teen and young-adult years.

Many young people aren't getting enough calcium in the foods they eat and this can lead to more broken bones. Research shows that boys are 32 percent and girls 56 percent more likely to experience bone fracture than children were 40 years ago.

In addition to building strong bones, did you know that calcium:

- Maintains a normal heartbeat?
- Regulates blood pressure?
- Helps the nervous system function properly?
- May decrease your risk of developing colon cancer?
- May play a role in weight management?

And, people with higher calcium intakes generally weigh less and have less body fat.



## Sounds good, but . . .

### What if my child doesn't drink milk or milk products because he or she has trouble digesting them?

Here are some things you can do if your child has trouble digesting milk (lactose intolerance):

- Drink low-fat or fat-free milk in servings of 1 cup or less.
- Drink low-fat or fat-free milk with your meals, such as cereal or a sandwich, instead of by itself.
- Drink chocolate milk, which may cause fewer symptoms.
- Eat milk products such as hard cheeses or cottage cheese, or reduced-fat yogurt. These foods have smaller amounts of lactose and may cause fewer symptoms.
- Choose lactose-free milk and milk products, which have the same amount of calcium as regular milk.



## Kids need vitamin D too!

Along with calcium, vitamin D helps children develop strong bones. Many children are vitamin D deficient because they don't drink enough fortified milk, putting them at risk for bone fractures and rickets. Other dietary sources include oily fish, egg yolks and vitamin D-fortified cereals, grain bars and juices.

See back for more tips on getting calcium in your diet

# Getting Calcium Every Day

## High-Calcium Foods

### Milk & Milk Products

Portion Size: 1 cup milk, yogurt, pudding; 1½ ounces hard cheese (approximately 300 mg calcium)

- Fat-free or low-fat milk
- Fat-free or low-fat flavored milk
- Fat-free or low-fat yogurt
- 2% milk
- String cheese
- Cheese
- Alternate: calcium-fortified soy beverage



## Medium-Calcium Foods

(3 medium-calcium foods = 1 high-calcium food)

Portion Size: ½ cup (approximately 100 mg calcium)

- 1/8 of a 12" cheese pizza
- Tofu
- Corn tortillas (2)
- Broccoli (3 cups)
- Refried beans
- Almonds (1/4 cup)



## How much calcium does your child need?

Age	Calcium need (mg per day)	Servings of milk & milk products to meet need
4-8 years	1,000	2½ servings
9-11 years	1,300	3 servings
12-18 years	1,300	3 servings

Based on the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

## Helpful Tips to get Calcium Every Day

- **Start your child's day with a healthy breakfast!** Try a breakfast smoothie using frozen fruit, yogurt and milk. Eat cereal with milk for breakfast.
- **Pack some snacks for school and after-school activities.** Take along fresh vegetables, fruit and string cheese, some almond granola or yogurt.
- **Packing lunch?** Boost calcium with cheese on a sandwich, a carton of cold yogurt, veggies with yogurt dip or mozzarella cheese sticks for a snack.
- **Offer milk at meal times** instead of soda or other empty-calorie drinks.
- **Dinner ideas?**
  - Top a baked potato with plain yogurt or shredded cheese.
  - Serve pasta with a milk-based sauce and shredded Parmesan.
  - Top salads with vegetables, beans and shredded cheese.
  - A bean and cheese burrito or a couple of tacos will do the trick too!
- **Be a positive role model!** Make sure you are meeting your own calcium needs. You can't expect your kids to get their calcium if you don't!



## Don't Forget Physical Activity!

**Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, some of which is bone building.**

Bone building means activities that put the weight of the body on the bones.

Walking, running, jumping rope, dancing, tennis or team sports, such as soccer or basketball, are activities your kids might enjoy and they're good for the bones.

Limit inactive activities, such as watching television or playing video games.