

NutritionNews

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*** November Special ***

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Calcium Counts!

If there's one nutrient that most people don't get enough of, it's calcium. Are you getting enough? If you're a woman, or man, over 50 you probably hear a lot about the importance of calcium for the prevention of osteoporosis. Here are some of the common questions we get asked about calcium, milk, and bone health.

Why is calcium important?

In addition to keeping our bones and teeth strong and healthy, calcium may also lower your risk of colon cancer and high blood pressure, and help improve cholesterol levels.

How much calcium do we need?

Adults (19-50 yrs):
1000mg/day

Pregnant/Lactating Women:
1000-1300mg/day

Adults over 50:
1200-1500mg/day

Note: If you're an athlete who exercises and sweats heavily, you may need an additional 200mg/day to compensate for increased loss of calcium through the skin.

Are milk and dairy products really the best way to get calcium?

Yes. Milk and milk products are the highest sources of calcium – plus, the lactose from these products helps increase calcium absorption.

What milk-alternative should I choose if I'm lactose intolerant?

If you're lactose intolerant try a lactose-free cow's milk. These are higher in fat-soluble vitamins (vitamin D) that naturally help increase calcium absorption, more so than other dairy alternatives.

What about non-dairy sources of calcium?

- Some vegetables, nuts, and seeds contain calcium but in much smaller amounts than milk products. They also contain oxalates or phytate, which decrease calcium absorption.
- Although some vegetarian sources of calcium may be more readily absorbed, a very large intake is required.
Example: 5 cups of cooked broccoli provides the same amount of calcium as 1 cup of cows milk, but does not contain significant amounts of vitamin D to increase calcium absorption.

About 82% of added calcium in calcium-fortified soymilk may stick to the bottom of the carton therefore, milk alternatives need to be shaken rigorously before you drink it.

How can I get more calcium in my diet?

- Drink at least 1 cup of milk with dinner, try a breakfast smoothie made with fruit and skim milk, eat probiotic yogurt every day, or grab 30g of cheese with sliced apple for a snack.
- Add skim milk powder as a thickener for soups, casseroles, oatmeal, or yogurts.
- Instead of coffee, order a latte made with skim milk and a touch of cinnamon.
- Chocolate milk has the same 16 essential nutrients than milk, with less sugar than unsweetened apple juice!

When choosing a supplement, remember:

- Calcium citrate is much better absorbed than calcium carbonate
- Our bodies can only absorb up to 500mg at one time
- Liquid calcium is also much more readily absorbed than calcium tablets.
- Calcium should be taken with meals to increase absorption
- Do not take calcium at the same time as iron
- You can get too much. The safe limit for calcium is 2500mg/day.