



Calcium and your health

Why do I need calcium?

Calcium is one of the building blocks of bones and teeth. Getting enough calcium early in life helps build strong bones. Getting enough calcium later in life helps keep bones strong and slows bone loss. It also helps muscles, nerves and hormones work properly.

How much calcium do I need each day?

Age	Aim for	Stay below
0-6 months	200 mg	1000 mg
6-12 months	260 mg	1500 mg
1 to 3 years	700 mg	2500 mg
4 to 8 years	1000 mg	2500 mg
9 to 18 years*	1300 mg	3000 mg
19 to 50 years*	1000 mg	2500 mg
51 to 70 years	Male: 1000 mg Female: 1200 mg	2000 mg
Over 70 years	1200 mg	2000 mg

mg = milligram

*Including during pregnancy and lactation

Which foods contain calcium?

Foods high in calcium include:

- Milk and dairy products such as yogurt and cheese
- Fortified plant-based beverages such as fortified soy beverage
- Tofu made with calcium sulfate
- Canned fish with bones such as salmon and sardines

Other sources of calcium include:

- Nuts and seeds such as almonds and sesame seeds
- Beans such as white beans and navy beans

- Dark green vegetables such as okra, bok choy, Chinese broccoli; leafy greens like kale, arugula, turnip greens; seaweed such as kelp and wakame

Aim to include several of these foods each day to meet your calcium needs. If you don't eat foods high in calcium daily, it may be hard to meet your needs.

How much calcium do I absorb from food?

Many factors affect how much calcium is absorbed from the food you eat. Your body naturally absorbs more calcium during times of bone growth, such as during childhood and pregnancy. Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium from food. To learn how to get enough vitamin D, visit [HealthLinkBC File #68n Vitamin D and your health](#)

Should I take a supplement?

Use the food sources table below to find out how much calcium you are getting from food. For foods with a label, check the nutrition facts table to learn how much calcium the food contains. You can also use the calcium calculator on the Osteoporosis Canada website at <https://osteoporosis.ca/calcium-calculator/>. If you are not getting enough calcium, try eating more foods that contain it. If you find it hard to get enough calcium from food, you may need to take a supplement to help meet your needs.

Talk to a dietitian, pharmacist or your health care provider if you have questions about the type or amount of supplement that is best for you.

For more information

- Calcium content of specific foods: [Canadian Nutrient File](#)

For more nutrition information, call **8-1-1** to speak with a registered dietitian.

Food sources of calcium

Food	Serving size	Calcium (mg)
Excellent source of calcium (250 mg or more)*		
Milk	250 mL (1 cup)	310
Fortified plant-based beverage such as soy, almond or oat**	250 mL (1 cup)	310
Fortified orange juice	250 mL (1 cup)	310
Cheese, semi-hard such as mozzarella and cheddar	50 g (1 ½ oz)	300-450
Buttermilk	250 mL (1 cup)	300
Sardines, Atlantic, canned with bones	75 g (2 ½ oz)	286
Cheese, ricotta	125mL (1/2 cup)	270-350
Kefir	250 mL (1 cup)	267
Tofu, made with calcium sulphate	150 g (5 oz)	220-400
Yogurt	175 g (3/4 cup)	200-390
Good source of calcium (150 to 249 mg)*		
Salmon, pink, canned with bones	75 g (2 ½ oz)	212
Edamame, cooked	175 mL (3/4 cup)	207
Source of calcium (50 to 149 mg)*		
Tempeh, cooked	150 g (5 oz)	144
Chia seeds	30 mL (2 tbsp)	136
Tahini (sesame seed butter)	30 mL (2 tbsp)	130
White beans, cooked	175 mL (3/4 cup)	119
Almond butter	30 mL (2 tbsp)	113
Pickering	75 g (2 ½ oz)	106
Turnip greens, cooked	125 mL (1/2 cup)	104
Cottage cheese, 1%	125mL (1/2 cup)	100
Almonds, dry roasted	60 mL (1/4 cup)	94
Navy beans, cooked	175 mL (3/4 cup)	93
Mustard greens or Chinese cabbage/bok choy, cooked	125 mL (1/2 cup)	86
Octopus	75 g (2 ½ oz)	80
Clams	75 g (2 ½ oz)	69
Naan	1 small (100g)	72
Seaweed, kelp, raw	125 mL (1/2 cup)	71
Okra, cooked	125 mL (1/2 cup)	65
Seaweed, wakame, raw	125 mL (1/2 cup)	63
Bread	2 slices (70g)	60
Chickpeas, cooked or canned	175 mL (3/4 cup)	58
Smelt, baked or broiled	75g (2 ½ oz)	58
Kale, raw	125 mL (1/2 cup)	53
Orange	1 medium	52

mL = milliliter; g = gram; tbsp = tablespoon; mg = milligram | **Source:** [Canadian Nutrient File](#)

*Categories are based on Canada's food labelling regulations for nutrient claims

**Fortified plant-based beverages are not recommended for children under 2 years of age

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.