



Calcium and bone health

Calcium is an important mineral for building strong bones and teeth, as well as keeping healthy heart, muscle and nerve function. Being a low body weight or having a poor calcium intake can increase the risk of osteoporosis.

A healthy, stable weight with a balanced and calcium-rich diet is vital during the recovery period for people with eating disorders.

How much calcium do we need per day?

	mg/ day	= Serves of dairy per day
9 – 13 years	1,000 - 1,300	4-5
14 – 18 years	1,300	5
19 – 30 years	1,000	4
51 – 70 years (Female)	1,300	5
51 – 70 years (Male)	1,000	4
> 70 years	1,300	5

Ref: Nutrient Reference Values for Australia & New Zealand, 2005

Did you know?

Dairy products such as milk, yoghurt and cheese are rich in calcium.

Many other non-dairy foods can also help reaching your goal of calcium intake. Read below to see some examples.

Each of the food listed below provides about **250mg calcium**

Dairy food	Calcium-added food	Other food
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup cow's milk 200g tub yoghurt 200g custard 2 slice cheddar cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup calcium-added plant-based drink ½ cup firm tofu 1 cup calcium-added cereal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60g canned sardines / ½ cup of salmon with bones 1 cup of cooked spinach 2/3 cup almonds with skin



1 Cup



2 Slices



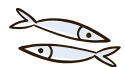
1 Tub



1/2 Cup



2/3 Cup



1/2 Cup

- Hard, yellow cheeses (cheddar cheeses) have more calcium than soft cheeses (ricotta and cottage cheese)

- For plant-based drinks, read the labels and choose those had been added with calcium (100mg per 100ml)

Myths about dairy products

1. Dairy products are high in sugar

Most plain flavoured milk, cheeses and yoghurts contain a type of natural sugar called lactose, which can be a normal part of a healthy diet for most people. For people who cannot digest lactose properly, lactose-free options are as healthy as the regular products.

2. Dairy products are fattening

Current studies suggest that dairy products can be a part of healthy diet and no direct link to weight gain.

Ways to include more calcium-rich food in your day:

- Add cheese to main dishes
- Include yoghurt, cheese and crackers as snacks
- Prepare yoghurt-based sauces or salad dressings
- Have some almonds (with skin) as snacks

Calcium from food is the best. If you are worried about your calcium intake or are thinking about

taking **calcium tablets**, discuss this with your doctor or your dietitian. Your dietitian or doctor may request for a bone mineral density scan every year to monitor your bone health.

More ways to improve bone health

1. Get more vitamin D from sunlight

Enough vitamin D is important for your body to use calcium. It is produced when your skin is exposed to sunlight for about 10 minutes.

2. Engage in more weight-bearing exercises

Physical activity, especially weight-bearing exercise can help maintaining bone strength. Examples include brisk walking, jogging and skipping.

What is osteoporosis?

- Osteoporosis means 'porous bones' that can lead to weak bones and an increased risk of fractures.
- Low body weight, infrequent or absent menstrual periods (in females) and low intake of calcium can lead to weakening of bones.