

Calcium – strong bones need a balanced diet

For strong bones and good health, it's crucial to eat a balanced, nutritious diet including all four main food groups:

- **Fruit and vegetables**
- **Carbohydrates (bread, potatoes, pasta and cereal)**
- **Dairy products and dairy free alternatives**
- **Protein (fish, meat, eggs and legumes).**

You will also need to ensure that you are getting plenty of calcium, as it's vital for the development and maintenance of our bones.



Why do we need calcium?

Calcium and other minerals combine to build strong and healthy bones. Your skeleton contains most of your calcium stores, which are essential for nerve, muscle, and heart health function. If you do not get enough calcium in your diet, your body will take the calcium it requires from your bones. If this happens you are at increased risk of osteoporosis as your bones, strength gradually declines and you are more at risk of breaking a bone.

How much calcium do we need?

- We recommend that adults try to eat at least 2-3 servings of calcium-rich food daily, for an overall intake of more than 500mg.
- The best and most easily-absorbed sources of calcium are dairy products, such as low-fat milk, cheese, and yoghurt.
- A serve is a cup of milk, a pottle of yoghurt, or two slices of cheese.
- There are also many plant-based milk alternatives (e.g., soy, rice, or almond milk), but be sure to choose one with added calcium.
- Dark green leafy vegetables, tofu, almonds, sesame seeds and tinned salmon with bones are also good sources of calcium.
- To check the calcium content of a variety of common foods, see the calcium food content chart over the page.

Please note that measuring calcium levels in your blood does not measure your calcium stores or indicate if you are getting adequate amounts of calcium in your diet. Your body works efficiently to regulate calcium blood levels, so you could show "normal" results but still need to increase your intake.

What about calcium supplements?

Studies have shown it's safer and more effective to eat a calcium-rich diet rather than relying on supplements as there is no evidence these prevent fractures and could possibly cause heart problems in women after menopause. If you feel you are unable to get enough calcium through your diet, you should discuss this with your doctor or dietician before taking any calcium-containing supplements.

Why do we need vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps our body absorb calcium from our diet, making it important for ongoing bone health and development. It also plays a key role in muscle function, so getting enough vitamin D can help with fall prevention.

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Getting enough vitamin D

Most people in New Zealand get sufficient vitamin D from outdoor exposure to sunlight during their normal daily activities. People at risk of vitamin D deficiency, who may benefit from a vitamin D supplement, include:

- Older people who are housebound with limited exposure to sunlight.
- Those with darker skin colour or people who wear veils.
- Those living in the South Island during the winter months.

Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your vitamin D levels or have limited exposure to the sun.

Recommended calcium intake

Calcium intake of more than 500mg per day is recommended as sufficient for adults which is roughly at least 2-3 servings of calcium rich food per day. This remains a controversial topic and some experts still recommend 1000mg/day.

Calcium serving examples:



310
mg

1 cup porridge + trim milk



276
mg

2 slices whole grain bread
+ 2 slices of Edam cheese



200
mg

Muesli + soy milk



366
mg

1 pottle of yoghurt natural



75
mg

Almonds (handful 30g)



260
mg

Stir fry tofu with green vegetables

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Content of food



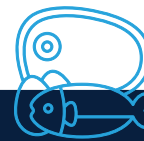
MILK PRODUCTS	QUANTITY mls	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Milk (trim)	250	350
Milk standard e.g. Blue top	250	290
Milk calcium enriched/calci trim e.g. Yellow top	250	475
Milkshake	250	360
Cappuccino	Regular	80
Soy/Rice Milk	250	325
Oat Milk	250	300
Almond Milk	250	300
Dairy food	150 pottle	320
Yoghurt (with fruit)	125 pottle	208
Yoghurt (natural)	150 pottle	366



VEGETABLES	QUANTITY approx	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Lettuce (shredded)	1 cup	13
Kale	1 cup cooked	100
Bok Choy/Pak Choi	1 cup cooked	160
Spinach, Silverbeet, Leeks, Chinese Cabbage	1/2 cup cooked	45mg
Watercress (chopped)	1 cup	41
Taro Leaves	1/2 cup cooked	120
Taro	1/2 cup cooked	42
Rhubarb (chopped)	1 cup raw	103
Carrots (chopped)	120 raw	42
Peas	1 cup cooked	36
Broccoli (steamed)	1 cup	60



CHEESE	QUANTITY grams	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Cheese Colby or Cheddar	30	240
Parmesan (grated)	30	246
Edam 2 slices	30	210
Soft Cheese (Brie, Camembert)	30	120
Feta	30	135
Mozzarella	30	215
Cream Cheese	30	90
Low Fat Cottage Cheese	150 pottle	320



MEAT FISH AND EGGS	QUANTITY grams	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Egg	1 standard	27
Red Meat	120	7
Chicken	120	17
Fish (white)	150	51
Tuna (canned in water)	172	24
Tofu	75	126
Sardines (tinned with bones)	85	325
Seaweed	100	70
Salmon (tinned with bones)	85	180
Prawns cooked	100	190
Oysters	100	132
Mussels	6 mussels	136
Ham	56 (1 slice)	13

*Note all values are dependent upon brand and are an approximate guide.

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BEANS AND LENTILS	QUANTITY grams	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Baked Beans	200g	122
Lentils (cooked)	200g	40
Chick Peas	200g	99
White Beans (cooked)	200g	132
Red Beans (cooked)	200g	93



NUTS AND SEEDS	QUANTITY grams	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Almonds	30	75
Walnuts	30	28
Hazelnuts	30	56
Brazil Nuts	30	28
Sesame Seeds	30	22
Sunflower Seeds	30	20
Tahini Paste	30	42
Chia Seeds	30	189
Peanuts (dry roasted)	30	16



DESSERTS	QUANTITY	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Cream	30mls	21
Custard	120mls	111
Ice Cream regular, fruit or low fat	1 cup	190
Vanilla Instant Pudding	120g	120
Rice Pudding	200g	210
Pancake	80g	62
Cheesecake	200g	130



STARCHY FOODS	QUANTITY grams	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Pasta (cooked)	180	26
Rice White (boiled)	180	4
Potatoes (boiled)	240	14
Bread (white)	1 slice	65
Bread (wholegrain)	1 slice	33
Muesli	50	21
Oats (uncooked)	½ cup	46
Naan	60	48
English Muffin (white)	1	30



FRUIT	QUANTITY grams	CALCIUM CONTENT mg
Orange	150	60
Apple	120	6
Banana	150	12
Apricot	120	19
Figs (dried)	2 figs	65
Prunes	100	43
Raisins	40	31

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