

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

All About Calcium (Part 1)

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Calcium is a necessary nutrient because it plays an essential role in human health, not only for bone development but also for heart, muscle and nerve function. Studies of older adults show that adequate calcium intake can slow bone loss and lower the risk of fracture. However, from time to time we hear reports about the potential unintended health consequences of **calcium supplements**. Osteoporosis Canada monitors and analyzes all of these reports in order to provide you with the latest evidence-based information in order to consume the right amount of this important nutrient. Have you been asking yourself if it is time to reduce or even stop your calcium supplements? COPN is pleased to provide you with information to help you get your calcium the best and healthiest way possible.

HOW MUCH CALCIUM DO I NEED?

For those over 50, Canada's Food Guide recommends at least 3 servings of milk and alternatives (2 servings for adults under age 50) each day. These include yogurt, cheese, calcium-fortified beverages, puddings, custards, etc. Osteoporosis Canada strongly recommends that everyone obtain their calcium through foods whenever possible.

Age	Daily Calcium Requirement (this includes your diet and supplements)
19 to 50	1000 mg
50+	1200 mg
pregnant or lactating women 18+	1000 mg

DAIRY AND CHOLESTEROL

Some people avoid dairy products altogether because they worry about cholesterol. If you are one of these people, you should know that there are many low fat dairy products you can eat that will not raise your cholesterol. These include skim and 1% milk, low fat yogurt, 1% or 2% cottage cheese and 4% cheese. For comparison, mozzarella cheese made from skim milk has about 17% milk fat (MF) and regular mozzarella has about 24% milk fat (MF), so the dairy products listed above are very, very low in fat, and do not pose a risk to one's cholesterol levels. Read the % MF and the food nutrition label on the package to be sure.

Fracture Fact:

The lifetime risk of hip fracture is greater (1 in 6) than the 1 in 9 lifetime risk of developing breast cancer.

[ARCHIVED
VIRTUAL
EDUCATION
FORUM](#)

For more information on this presentation and upcoming forums, visit our [website](#).

WHAT ABOUT LACTOSE INTOLERANCE?

Avoiding milk and other dairy foods because of lactose intolerance can have serious effects on nutrient intake, including lowering the intake of calcium, which leads to an increased risk of osteoporosis and fracture. Here are some tips to help you lessen the symptoms of lactose intolerance:

- Try to consume small amounts of milk and other dairy products more frequently throughout the day rather than having fewer, larger servings of dairy.
- Consume milk and milk products with meals.
- Consume milk and milk products every day. This may reduce the symptoms, because the bacteria in the gut get used to the lactose and less gas may be produced. Try lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk and other dairy products; a glass of lactose-free milk provides the same nutrients as regular milk.
- Enjoy hard cheeses such as Swiss, Edam, Gouda and Cheddar, which contain very little lactose. There are some lower fat cheese alternatives.
- Choose yogurt. The bacteria in some yogurts may help break down the lactose it contains.
- Try Kefir (a fermented milk drink). It may be better tolerated.
- Use lactase drops/tablets (available at a pharmacy) in milk to reduce the lactose content.

Alternatively, there are other dairy-free foods that are high in calcium. These include:

- calcium-fortified soy, almond and rice beverages (check the nutrition labels)
- calcium-fortified orange juice (check the nutrition labels)
- canned salmon or canned sardines (when you eat bones that have been softened by the canning process, these foods are excellent sources of calcium. There are varieties of canned salmon that are skinless and boneless. These varieties will **not** provide you with calcium, as the calcium is in the bones of the fish.

What should you look for on the nutrition label? One cup of cow's milk has about 300 mg of calcium, which will be specified as 30% of daily value for calcium on the nutrition label. If a cup of calcium fortified orange juice or soy, almond or rice beverage has about the

same % value of calcium (close to 30%), then it can be considered a good alternative to dairy in terms of calcium content.

HOW DO I CALCULATE THE CALCIUM IN MY DIET?

People who are 50 or older need at least 1200 mg of calcium each day. Here is a very simple way to calculate this. First, give yourself a baseline of 300 mg of calcium simply for eating anything at all. This is because there is a small amount of calcium in a variety of foods such as breads, muffins, oranges, etc, so even without eating any high calcium foods, you can't help but get about 300 mg of calcium in your daily diet.

Now, add another 300 mg for any of the following high calcium foods:

- 1 cup (250 ml) of cow's milk or goat's milk (including whole milk, 2%, 1%, skim or chocolate milk)
- 1 cup (250 ml) of fortified soy, almond or rice beverage
- 1 cup (250 ml) of fortified (or calcium rich) orange juice
- ¾ cup of yogurt (175 ml)
- 2 slices of cheese
- one chunk of cheese (a 3 cm cube)
- salmon, canned with bones (1/2 can or 107 g) or sardines, canned with bones (7 medium or 84 g).

If you are 50 or older, in addition to the 300 mg of baseline calcium for eating anything at all, you need another 900 mg of elemental calcium. This translates to three servings of any of the above high calcium foods per day, or one serving of a high calcium food at each meal. This will ensure the 1200 mg of calcium you need. Remember to add in any calcium you might be getting from a multivitamin tablet. If you are already getting close to the recommended amount then you are doing great. Your body needs calcium and you are getting the calcium you need from your diet.

In our next issue of Coping (coming August 2), we will talk about supplements – how to know if you need one, how to choose and take them, and interactions with other medications.

FUNNY BONE: Half the people you know are below average.

A Message from our Sponsor

Judith Blucheau, RD, Dietitian

Staying hydrated

When you spend a day under the sun, it's important to stay hydrated. Water is a great choice to beat the heat, but some people prefer to quench their thirst with soft drinks or alcoholic beverages, which are not as good at keeping you hydrated.

Made of 85% water, milk is naturally refreshing. It also contains 16 essential nutrients, which is not the case for soft drinks or cocktails.

For a taste twist, mix frozen fruit and milk in a blender for a chilled smoothie. What a delicious way to get your fluids!

To learn more about milk products and to discover our dietitians' recipes, go to getenough.ca.

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