

Meeting your calcium needs when you are pregnant

Why do I need calcium?

Calcium is a mineral needed for strong bones and teeth. Calcium also allows blood to clot normally, muscles and nerves to function properly, the heart to beat normally, and helps to control blood pressure.

Most of the calcium in your body is in your bones.

What if I don't get enough calcium?

If you do not get enough calcium to meet the needs of your growing baby, your body will take calcium from your bones. This will decrease your bone mass putting you at risk for osteoporosis or thinning of bones.

Not getting enough calcium can also increase your risk of high blood pressure during pregnancy or decrease the bone mass of your growing baby.

How much calcium do I need daily during pregnancy?

Age	Calcium
14 to 18 years	1300 mg
19 to 50 years	1000 mg

How do I know if I am getting enough calcium from food?

Here is a simple way to know if you are getting enough calcium from food:

1. Start off by giving yourself 300 mg of calcium for the foods you usually eat every day. This is because there is calcium in a variety of foods including oranges, bread and eggs.
2. Add 300 mg for any of these high calcium foods you eat, such as:
 - 1 cup of milk (all types including whole, 2%, 1%, skim or chocolate)
 - 1 cup of calcium fortified soy or rice beverage
 - 1 cup of fortified (or calcium rich) orange juice
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup yogurt
 - 1 cube ($1\frac{1}{4}$ inch) of cheese
 - 2 slices of processed cheese

Write your daily total here _____

If you are not getting 1000 mg of calcium from your food, then you need to increase sources of calcium in your diet (see insert for more foods that have calcium) or take a calcium supplement.

Should I take a calcium supplement?

Your body uses calcium from foods more easily than calcium from pills or supplements. Natural calcium rich foods also provide other nutrients that are not present in calcium supplements. If you have trouble getting enough calcium from foods, talk to your doctor or dietitian about a calcium supplement.

The amount of calcium you need from a supplement depends on how much calcium you are getting from food. Calcium carbonate is the least expensive supplement and you need to take it with meals to increase its absorption. Calcium citrate can be taken without food. Do not take more than 500 mg (elemental calcium) at one time or a total of 2000 mg in a day.

Do calcium supplements interact with other supplements and medications?

Yes, calcium supplements can interact with other supplements and medications.

To help prevent decreased absorption of iron:

- Take iron supplements at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after taking calcium supplements.

To help prevent decreased absorption of levothyroxine (brand name Synthroid/Eltroxin):

- Take calcium at least 4 hours before or 4 hours after taking levothyroxine.

To help prevent increased blood levels of calcium:

- Let your doctor know when taking Thiazide diuretics (Hydrochlorothiazide/Indapamide) and calcium supplements together, as your calcium levels will need to be checked regularly.

How can I get enough calcium if I have lactose intolerance?

Please refer to the Hamilton Health Sciences patient education handout 'Eating less lactose' www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca

Good Sources of Calcium

- Builds healthy bones and teeth
- Helps maintain normal blood pressure
- Needed for healthy muscles, heart and nerves



evaporated milk



milk



calcium fortified
soy beverage



cheese



yogurt



sardines (canned
with bones)



tofu set with
calcium



salmon (canned
with bones)



calcium fortified
juice



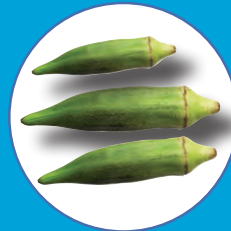
milk pudding



soybeans
(edamame)



navy beans



okra



bok choy



almonds

- Choose calcium foods that are also a source of vitamin D.
- Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium. It also helps your body better use the calcium it absorbs.



Sources of Calcium in Foods

Your Daily Calcium Needs:

During Pregnancy and Breastfeeding:

18 years and under = 1300 mg*

*mg = milligrams

19 years and older = 1000 mg

Excellent Sources of Calcium (275 mg or more per serving)

	Serving Size	Milli-grams
Parmesan cheese	50 g	550
Swiss cheese	50 g	400
Sesame seeds, dried	60 ml	360
Evaporated milk, undiluted	125 ml	350
Cheddar, brick, mozzarella, edam cheeses (average)	50 g	340
Calcium fortified soy beverage	250 ml	320
Calcium fortified rice beverage	250 ml	320
Yogurt, plain - 1%, 2%	175 ml	320
Milk-homo, 2%, 1%, skim, chocolate, buttermilk	250 ml	300
Skim milk powder (amount for reconstituted 250 ml)	24 g	300
Ricotta cheese	125 ml	290
Processed cheese	50 g	290
Sardines, canned with bones	75 g	290





Good Sources of Calcium (165 – 274 mg per serving)

	Serving Size	Milligrams
Tofu, firm, set with calcium sulphate	150 g	230
Yogurt, flavoured	175 ml	230
Yogurt, beverage	175 g	190
Salmon, canned with bones	75 g	190
Calcium fortified orange juice	125 ml	185
Frozen yogurt	175 ml	175
Cottage cheese 2% MF	250 ml	165

Sources of Calcium (55 – 164 mg per serving)

	Serving Size	Milligrams
Custard or milk pudding	125 ml	160
Tahini	30 ml	130
Soybeans, edamame, boiled	175 ml	130
Tofu, soft, set with magnesium chloride	150 g	120
Pudding cups, ready-to-eat	125 ml	100
Navy beans, boiled	175 ml	95
Bok choy, okra, kale	250 ml	90
Almonds, dried	60 ml	80

Measuring Serving Sizes According to *Canada's Food Guide*

				<p>50 g = 1.5 oz = 2 thumbs</p> <p>75 g = 2.5 oz = 3 thumbs</p>
250 ml = 1 cup	175 ml = 3/4 cup	125 ml = 1/2 cup	60 ml = 1/4 cup	

Sources: Canadian Nutrient File (2007b), Dietary Reference Intakes (2006), and Health Canada.

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