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CALCIUM GUIDE

Why you need calcium

Some 99 per cent of your body's calcium is found in the skeleton, where it helps provide strength. Your body constantly breaks down and rebuilds your bones to keep them strong. When you're young, your body builds up calcium as fast as it removed it from the bones. As you grow, your bones get bigger and stronger, until bone mass reaches its peak somewhere between the ages of 28 and 35.

But after mid 30s your bones become thinner at a rate of between 1% and 2% a year because existing bone cells are removed by the body faster than bone is made. This is a normal part of ageing process and a good calcium intake essential to keep bone losses as low as possible.

Around the menopause, the rate of bone loss is more rapid as oestrogen levels – a bone-boosting hormone – tend to fall. That's why it's so important to lay down good foundations of bone health during your childhood, teenage years and 20s. The stronger your bones are by the time you reach your 30s, the stronger they stay for longer. Building strong bones when you are young helps protect against brittle bone disease (osteoporosis) in later life.

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis develops when bones are not strong enough to withstand bone losses. The bones become weak and brittle and are more likely to fracture. One in two women and one in five men aged over 50 in the UK develop osteoporosis



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How much calcium do you need?

Adults need around 700 mg a day but the needs of children and teenagers vary according to their age. Check the table below:

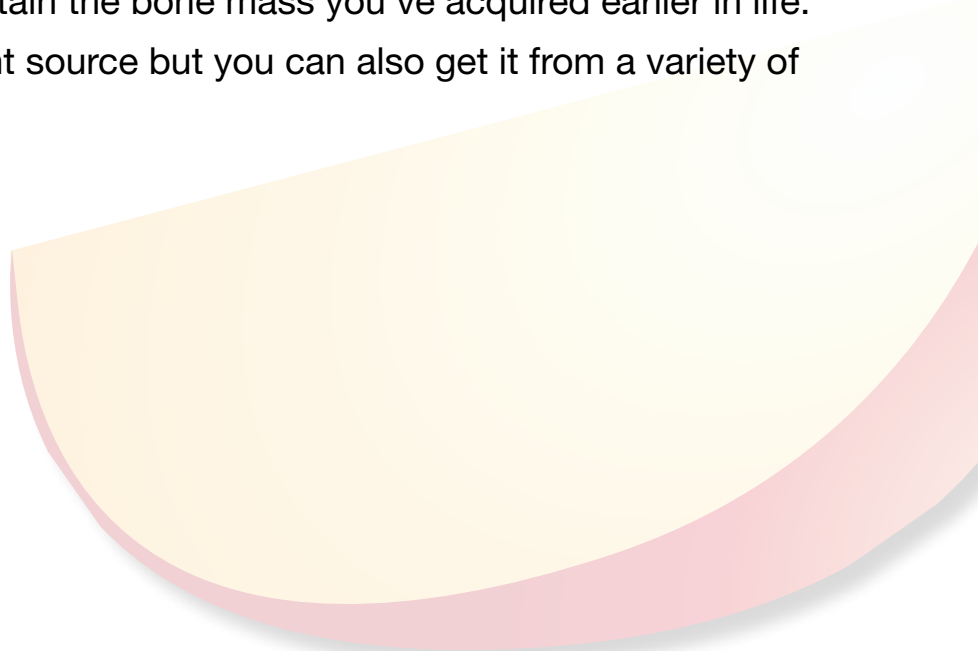
Daily calcium requirement (mg)

1 – 3 years (boys and girls)	350
4–6 years (boys and girls)	450
7–10 years (boys and girls)	550
11–18 years (boys)	1000
11–18 years (girls)	800
19 + years	700
Pregnancy	700
Breastfeeding	700 + 550 extra

How to get enough calcium

Before the age of 30 to 35, you can improve your bone mass by eating a calcium-rich diet. Thereafter, eating calcium-rich foods, combined with regular weight-bearing exercise will help maintain the bone mass you've acquired earlier in life.

Dairy products are an important source but you can also get it from a variety of non-dairy foods.





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Calcium content of various foods

200ml glass semi skimmed milk	240 mg
25g Edam	199mg
25g Cheddar	185 mg
80g prawns	125mg
80g broccoli	80mg
80g spinach	136 mg
50g pilchards in tomato sauce	125mg
50g sardines in oil	250mg
100g cooked red kidney beans	71 mg
160g tofu	306 mg
1 orange	75 mg
25g almonds	60mg
25g sesame seeds	168 mg
2 slices white bread	124 mg

Getting the most from calcium

You need more than calcium to prevent or slow down osteoporosis. Other nutrients, including vitamin D, magnesium, potassium and vitamin C are also important for healthy bones.

Vitamin D is essential for your body to be able to absorb and use calcium properly. It is obtained from sunlight but also from oily fish, egg yolk, fortified margarine and breakfast cereals. There's no official RDA but the EU recommend 5 micrograms (ug) daily. You can get this amount from ½ teaspoon (2.5 ml) cod liver oil or ¼ of a tin (22g) salmon or 1 egg yolk.



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What to avoid

Keep your bones healthy by avoiding the things that may cause you to lose calcium.

Salt and caffeine cause the body to lose calcium through the urine, and fizzy drinks, such as cola contain phosphoric acid, which also leaches calcium from your bones.

Don't smoke and limit your intake of alcohol – both are harmful to your skeleton, as are any extreme form of dieting and exercise because they result in you having low levels of bone-friendly oestrogen, even at a young age.

Being super-skinny or following fad diets increase your risk of bone loss and osteoporosis. Without enough oestrogen to maintain bone mass, the bones get weaker, more porous and lighter. This may result in osteopenia, a lower-than-normal bone density, or osteoporosis, a more severe loss of bone density. Don't cut out food groups (e.g. wheat; dairy) without professional advice or impose strict food rules (e.g. no fat; no 'junk' food) – you need to choose a wide variety of different foods to get your daily quota of nutrients.

Tips for healthy bones

- Get active. Weight bearing exercise – like jogging and walking puts stress on your bones in a good way and helps to keep them strong. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity, five days per week.
- Eat three portions of calcium-rich foods every day. One portion is 200ml milk, 25g cheese or 150g yoghurt. Each provides approximately 200 – 250 mg calcium.
- Consider taking a calcium supplement if you've severely dieted in the past, or you do not eat dairy foods or have a milk allergy



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Calcium facts

- The calcium in dairy foods is more readily absorbed than that in many other foods
- Calcium is vital for nerve and muscle function, along with magnesium and potassium
- Evidence suggest that calcium can keep you slim by increasing the body's metabolism and also reducing the new fat the body lays down
- Regular consumption of low-fat dairy products appears to be related to less abdominal obesity, the type associated with high heart disease and diabetes risk.
- Although spinach has a high calcium content, the calcium is bound to a substance called oxalate, which means that your body can't absorb it very easily.
- Calcium-rich foods may help you get a more restful night's sleep. Calcium helps your brain make the sleep-inducing brain chemical melatonin.





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Fridge Inspection?

Ever wondered where you are going wrong? Tired of trying to be healthy but seeing no results? Anita's sneak peek inside your fridge could give you the clues and inspiration you are looking for.

As a registered nutritionist who has written 24 books on fitness and health, Anita's expert advice will spurn you along the road to victory. All she needs from you is a photograph of the contents of your fridge (remember to be honest guys – sneaking out and buying a crate full of groceries that you never actually eat is not going to help!) and in return she will give you some tips on improving your diet. These could be:

- Items to swap – a healthier option but with as much taste
- Alternative food – something new to try
- Winning combinations – the perfect food match

She'll even give your fridge a healthy rating score. Simply send in your photo to edam@beattiegroupp.com and see if you get picked for Anita's fridge inspection.

