

Why Is Vitamin D Important?

Your body needs vitamin D to absorb calcium. If you do not get enough vitamin D, you are at greater risk of bone loss and broken bones.

You can get small amounts of vitamin D from a few foods, like fortified milk, liver and fatty fish (e.g., wild mackerel, salmon and tuna). Your skin can make vitamin D from the sun, but getting too much sun can be harmful, and sunscreen blocks out vitamin D.

See NOF's vitamin D recommendations (below) to find out how much is recommended for you. To get enough vitamin D, many people need to take a supplement. Ask your healthcare provider whether you should have a test to check your vitamin D levels. You may be at risk of vitamin D deficiency if you:

- Are age 60 or older
- Spend little time in the sun
- Live in a nursing home or are homebound
- Have a medical condition or take a medicine that affects vitamin D levels
- Have very dark skin
- Are obese

Vitamin D Recommendations

- **Adults under age 50** need a total of 400-800 international units (IUs) of vitamin D every day.**
- **Age 50 and older** need a total of 800-1,000 IUs of vitamin D every day.**

**Some people need to take more vitamin D than others. Talk to your healthcare provider about your personal vitamin D needs.

Note: According to IOM, the safe upper limit for vitamin D is 4,000 IUs per day for most adults.

Other Nutrients for Healthy Bones

In addition to calcium and vitamin D, there are other nutrients that appear to be important for bone health. Some examples are:

Vitamin K. Sources include dried plums (prunes) and certain dark green leafy vegetables like kale, collard greens, spinach, mustard greens, turnip greens and Brussels sprouts.

Potassium. Sources include dried plums (prunes), tomato products, raisins, potatoes, spinach, sweet potatoes, papaya, oranges, orange juice, bananas and plantains.

Magnesium. Sources include spinach, beet greens, okra, tomato products, artichokes, plantains, potatoes, sweet potatoes, collard greens and raisins.

Vitamin C. Sources include red peppers, green peppers, oranges, grapefruits, broccoli, strawberries, Brussels sprouts, papaya and pineapples.

Try to eat 1.5 cups of fruit and 2 cups of vegetables every day for bone and overall health.



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Your Guide to a Bone Healthy Diet

Calcium and Your Bones

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), getting enough calcium is important for building and maintaining strong bones. Many people ask how much calcium they should be getting from supplements.

You can start by reviewing NOF's Daily Calcium Recommendations to learn the total amount of calcium you need each day. Then estimate the amount of calcium you get from your diet and complete the Calcium Calculator chart to determine whether you're getting enough calcium to meet your daily needs.

Calcium Recommendations

Women

- **Under age 50** need a total of 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium* every day.
- **Women age 50 and older** need a total of 1,200 mg of calcium* every day.

Men

- **Under age 71** need a total of 1,000 mg of calcium* every day.
- **Age 71 and older** need a total of 1,200 mg of calcium* every day.

*This includes the total amount of calcium you get from both food and supplements.

Note: According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM), the safe upper limit for calcium is 2,000-2,500 mg for most adults.

Estimate Your Calcium Intake

Step 1: Estimate the number of servings you have on a typical day for each type of food. One serving is equal to approximately:

- 8 oz. or one cup of low-fat or fat-free milk
- 6 oz. of low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- 1.5 oz. of low-fat cheese

The amount of calcium in fortified foods and juices ranges from 80-1,000 mg. Read the label to find out how much calcium is in each serving. Examples are juices, soy milk, almond milk and cereals.

Step 2: List the estimated number of servings of each food item under the Calcium Calculator's "Servings Per Day" column.

Step 3: Multiply the number of "Servings Per Day" by the number of milligrams (mg) under "Calcium." So, if you have about two servings of milk per day, multiply 2 x 300 to get a total of 600 mg of calcium from milk.

Step 4: After you have calculated the total amount of calcium for each product, add these totals in the right-hand column to get your Total Daily Calcium Intake. Make sure to include 250 mg for "**estimated total from other foods.**" If you know you're getting more than 250 mg of calcium from other foods each day, increase this number. See calcium-rich vegetables list (on the right). ➔

Step 5: To find out how much additional calcium you need, subtract your Total Daily Calcium Intake from the amount of calcium recommended for your gender and age (on the left). ←

This number is the total calcium you need each day. You can get this amount by having another serving of a calcium-rich food or by taking a calcium supplement.

Calcium Calculator

Product	Servings Per Day	Calcium (mg)	Total (mg)
Milk (8 oz.)		x 300	=
Yogurt (6 oz.)		x 300	=
Cheese (1.5 oz.)		x 300	=
Fortified foods & juices		x 80-1,000	=
Estimated Total from Other Foods <small>Note: Most people get about 250 mg of calcium from fruits, vegetables and other foods. Add this amount when calculating your total daily calcium intake.</small>			+ 250 mg
Total Daily Calcium Intake			=

Calcium-rich Vegetables

Estimated calcium per cup (cooked)

Collard greens	265 mg
Broccoli rabe	200 mg
Turnip greens	200 mg
Kale	175 mg
Soy beans (mature)	175 mg
Bok choy	160 mg
Dandelion greens	150 mg
Okra	120 mg
Mustard greens	100 mg
Broccoli	60 mg