

Eating the Bone-Healthy Way

Eat a varied, healthy diet to get the calcium and vitamin D you need. It will keep your bones strong throughout your life.

This chart can help you learn how much calcium and vitamin D you need.

Always talk with your health care provider about what is best for you.

Age	Calcium (*mg per day)
Women 19–50 years	1000
Women 51–70 years	1200
Men 19–70 years	1000
Men and Women 71+ years	1200
Age	Vitamin D (*IU/mcg per day)
1 to 70 years	600 IU/15 mcg
71+ years	800 IU/20 mcg

*mg = milligrams, IU = International Units, mcg = micrograms
 Source: National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine, 2010

What is the best way to get calcium?

The best way to get calcium is from food. If you eat a calcium-rich food or drink at each meal, you will likely get all the calcium you need. Calcium-rich foods also contain other bone-healthy nutrients. Add these foods to your diet.

If you cannot get the calcium you need from food, talk to your health care provider. Find out if a calcium supplement is right for you.

What foods contain calcium?

Different foods supply the calcium and vitamin D you need. Below are some examples.

Dairy Foods:

- Milk – any type
- Yogurt
- Cheese

It's best to select low-fat dairy foods. They are better for your heart. They also give you calcium and vitamin D without the fat. Low-fat means 1% or less.

Non-dairy Foods:

- Dark green leafy vegetables – collards, mustard greens, edamame, kale, and bok choy
- Dried figs
- Nuts – almonds and roasted soy nuts
- Beans – it's important to rinse them well. It will help you absorb their calcium content.

Calcium-fortified Foods

Always check nutrition labels to be sure calcium has been added. It's also important to read the label for protein content.

- Non-dairy milk – almond, coconut, flax, hemp, oat, rice, and soy beverages
- Juices
- Tofu
- Grains -- cereals, waffles, and nutrition bars
- Soy cheeses.

Foods with Vitamin D

Natural Sources

- Fish – eel, flounder, halibut, mackerel, salmon, sardines, sea bass, swordfish, trout, and tuna
- Mushrooms – treated with ultraviolet light
- Eggs – including the yolk

Vitamin D-Fortified Foods

Always check nutrition labels to be sure vitamin D has been added.

- Milk – with or without lactose
- Non-dairy milk alternatives
- Juice
- Yogurt
- Tofu
- Grains – cereals and nutrition bars

It's important to get the recommended amount of vitamin D. Find out how much vitamin D you get from food. This will help you see if you need a vitamin D supplement. Are you already taking a multivitamin or calcium supplement? Check to see if it gives you vitamin D.

How should I eat to keep my bones healthy?

At each meal, have a food and/or drink that is calcium-rich – for example, dairy.

Also, divide your plate this way:

- Fill half your plate with a variety of vegetables and fruit that have bold colors – for example, oranges or broccoli
- Fill one quarter of your plate with whole grains, like brown rice.
- Fill another quarter of your plate with lean protein – meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, soy foods, nuts, nut butters and/or seeds.

Eating in a “bone-healthy” way will help your overall health.

This fact sheet should not replace medical advice. Always talk with your health care provider about your own nutrition needs for strong bones.

To learn more about bone health, visit www.nysopep.org or, call the NYSOPEP resource center at (845) 786-4772.