

Calcium

Calcium is an important nutrient. It helps muscles and nerves work, helps blood clot, and helps build strong bones and prevent osteoporosis.

Why does my child need calcium?

Calcium is very important for your child while they are growing and for the rest of their lives. Calcium helps the body in many ways. It is important for:

- Heart muscle and heart function
- Nerve function
- Blood clotting
- Building strong bones and teeth
- Preventing bone loss later in life

When there is not enough calcium in the diet, the body takes calcium from the bones. This makes bones soft and weak. For this reason, it is important to get enough calcium every day.

The body also needs enough vitamin D to be able to absorb calcium. That is why vitamin D is added to many foods, drinks and supplements that have calcium.

How much calcium does my child need?

The body absorbs calcium best when it gets it throughout the day instead of all at once.

Age	Amount of calcium needed daily
Birth to 6 months	200 milligrams (mg)
7 months to 1 year	260 mg
1 to 3 years	700 mg or 3 to 4 servings
4 to 8 years	1,000 mg or 3 to 4 servings
9 to 18 years	1,300 mg or 4 to 5 servings daily
19 to 50 years	1,000mg or 3 to 4 servings

How do I find calcium on a food label?

To find out the amount of calcium in foods, look at the line that says “calcium” on the nutrition label. It is written as a percentage of 1000 mg. This is called a percent (%) daily value. For example, if it says it has 30% daily value of calcium, there would be 300 mg of calcium in that serving (30% of 1000 mg or 300 mg).

What are good sources of calcium?

Dairy foods are a major source of calcium. If your child cannot or does not eat dairy foods, it might be hard for them to get enough calcium. Below is a list of the amount of calcium in dairy and non-dairy foods. Foods with at least 200 mg of calcium in a serving are high-calcium foods. Your child can meet the daily recommended amount of calcium if they eat high-calcium foods with most meals and snacks every day.

For more information visit ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Calcium-Consumer/.

To Learn More

- Nutrition
206-987-4758
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Calcium

Dairy (1 cup (8 ounces) or 1 ounce of cheese)

Food

Calcium (milligrams)

Cow milk (Whole, 2%, 1%, or skim)	276 / 293 / 299
Goat milk	300
Buttermilk	300
Evaporated milk, canned	658
Cottage cheese (2%), 1 cup	250
Ricotta cheese, ¼ cup	150
Mozzarella cheese	222
Swiss cheese	252
String cheese	200
Cheddar cheese	200
Sour cream	232
Rice pudding	163
Yogurt	375
Kefir	300
Ice cream (vanilla)	168
Frozen or soft serve yogurt	206

Calcium-Fortified Dairy Alternatives (1 cup)

Soy milk	300-400
Hemp milk	300-500
Coconut milk drink	300-450
Almond milk	300-450
Rice milk	300
Oat milk	300
Rice or soy yogurt, 6 ounces	300

Seafood (3 ounces)

Wild Coho Salmon	38
Shrimp	60
Crab, cooked or canned	77
Salmon, canned with bones	212
Sardines, canned with bones	325
<i>*It is important to avoid serving sardines to children younger than 3 years old. The bones in the fish are a choking danger.</i>	
Rainbow trout, wild	73
Mackerel, canned, boneless	205
Snapper	34

Vegetables (1 cup cooked)

The body does not absorb the calcium in leafy green vegetables like spinach, kale, collards, beet greens, and rhubarb as well as it absorbs calcium in other foods. Other foods on the list are better choices for calcium.

Bok Choy	158
Beet greens	164
Broccoli (steamed)	90
Broccoli (raw)	34
Okra	124
Brussels sprouts	56
Spinach (boiled)	245
Collard greens	266
Mustard greens	165
Turnip greens	197
Kale	177
Swiss chard	102
Rhubarb	348
Green beans	20
Acorn squash	90
Butternut squash	84

Calcium

Fruit (1 cup)	Avocado	30
	Blackberries	42
	Medjool Dates	77
	Grapefruit	51
	Kiwi	61
	Orange	80
	Orange juice (fortified)	350
	Raspberries	31
Nuts & Seeds (¼ cup)	Almonds	96
	Almond butter, 2 Tablespoons	80
	Hazelnuts/Filberts	38
	Pistachios	33
	Brazil nuts	50
	Peanuts	34
	Sesame seeds, 1 Tablespoon	88
	Sesame seed tahini, 2 Tablespoons	128
Beans/Legumes (1 cup cooked)	Garbanzo/Chickpeas	40
	Cranberry beans	88
	Great Northern	139
	Pinto/Refried	160
	Navy	126
	Black-eyed peas	150
	Tofu, firm w/calcium sulfate, ½ cup	860
	Tofu, firm, with nigari, ½ cup	253
	Soybeans/Edamame	130
	Roasted soybean nuts, ½ cup	119
	Baked beans (homemade)	154
Grains (1 cup cooked)	Amaranth	116
	Fortified ready-to-eat cereals	235-1045
	Instant oatmeal	105
	Teff	123
	Quinoa	31
	Whole wheat flour	41
	Oat groats	43
Sea Vegetables	Wakame, ¼ cup	30
	Hijiki, 1 Tablespoon	40
	Kombu, 2 Tablespoons	30
	Dried Agar Seaweed, 1 ounce	180
Other	Dried figs, 2 large	28
	Dried apricots, ½ cup	36
	Dried prunes, ½ cup	37
	Soy flour, ½ cup	125
	Artichoke, medium size	135
	Blackstrap molasses, 1 Tablespoon	100-200

Values from: USDA What's In the Foods You Eat Search Tool (2015-2016), US Dietary Guidelines (2015), US Dietary Reference Intakes (2011), Bowes and Church's Food Values of Portions Commonly Used, 17th ed (2009), CalorieKing.com

What are some high-calcium snack ideas?

Dairy high-calcium snack ideas

- Baked potato with sour cream or plain yogurt and shredded cheese
- Graham crackers and string cheese
- Pudding made with milk
- Berries, melons, banana, or apple slices dipped in yogurt
- Yogurt with granola
- Calcium fortified cereal with milk
- Fruit smoothie made with milk and yogurt

Non-dairy high-calcium snack ideas

- Toast with almond butter and enriched rice or soy milk
- Dried figs and almonds
- Hummus with broccoli
- Pita bread with tahini, cucumber and lemon
- Soy yogurt with slivered almonds
- Fruit smoothie made with fortified soy or rice milk and yogurt
- Bowl of fortified cereal with enriched soy or rice milk
- Graham crackers with almond butter and enriched rice or soy milk

Should I give my child a calcium supplement?

Calcium is better absorbed from foods you eat, but your child may also benefit from a calcium supplement. There are many different brands and forms of calcium supplements (tablets, chews, pills, gummies, and liquid). Calcium supplements often have Vitamin D since it helps your body absorb calcium. Check with your child's healthcare provider before giving any type of vitamin or supplement to your child. If your child needs a calcium supplement, their healthcare provider can help you choose the type and amount that is best.