

Calcium Calculator

Why is calcium important?

Calcium is needed to build strong bones and teeth. It is also involved in maintaining a normal heartbeat, blood pressure and muscle contraction.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps the body to absorb calcium from foods. Vitamin D is made through the action of sunlight on our skin during the summer months (April-September). Vitamin D is also found in a small number of foods (oily fish, egg yolks, fortified margarines and some breakfast cereals); however it is very difficult to get all the vitamin D we need from diet alone.

- It is recommended that all children under the age of 5 years take a daily multivitamin supplement containing vitamins A, C and D. You may be eligible for free Healthy Start vitamins – for more information see: www.healthystart.nhs.uk
- It is recommended that all children over 5 years also take a daily vitamin D supplement during the winter months; or throughout the year if they spend a lot of time indoors or wear clothing that covers most of their skin when outdoors.
- Babies up to the age of 1 year require 8.5-10 micrograms of vitamin D each day. Children over 1 year require 10 micrograms of vitamin D per day.

Healthy Bones

Calcium and vitamin D work best alongside physical activity to strengthen bones. It is recommended that children do at least 60 minutes of activity every day. Weight-bearing exercises such as walking, cycling, running and tennis are best for building bone strength.

How much calcium does my child need?

This depends on your child's age:

Age (years)	Calcium (mg) per day
Under 1 year	525 mg
1-3 years	350 mg
4-6 years	450 mg
7-10 years	550 mg
11-18 years	800 mg (girls) 1000 mg (boys)

Which foods contain calcium?

Dairy products are rich sources of calcium:

Food Average Portion	Calcium Content
200 mls milk	240 mg
1 pot yogurt (120g)	170 mg
1 small pot fromage frais (45g)	70 mg
1 triangle cheese spread	84 -138 mg
Cheese (30g)	220 mg
Rice pudding (1½ tin – 200g)	198 mg
Custard pot (125g)	133 mg
Malted drink (25g serving made up with 200 ml milk)	800 mg

Children on a cow's milk free diet

For children following a cow's milk free diet, there are many non-dairy sources of calcium. For all dairy-free milks / yogurts, please check the food label to ensure they are fortified with calcium.

Food Average Portion	Calcium Content
200 mls calcium fortified milk alternatives, eg. Soya / Oat / Nut / Coconut	240 mg
200 mls calcium fortified rice milk (can be used if your child is over 4½ years old)	240 mg
Calcium fortified soya yoghurt/custard (125g)	150 mg

Other Foods containing Calcium

Calcium fortified breakfast cereals (30g)	130 mg
Calcium fortified instant hot oat cereal (30g)	402 mg
White bread (1 slice)	50 mg
Calcium fortified bread (1 slice) such as: Hovis Best of Both or Kingsmill 50:50 Vitamin Boost	150-179 mg
Pitta bread / chapatti (65g)	60 mg
Tofu set with calcium chloride or calcium sulphate (60g)	200 mg
½ tin salmon (52g)	47 mg
Scampi in breadcrumbs (6 pieces)	190 mg
Broccoli (2 large florets)	34 mg
Spring greens (75g)	56 mg
Okra (6 fingers, stir fried)	66 mg
1 medium orange	75 mg

Note: Spinach, dried fruits, beans, seeds and nuts are not good sources of calcium. This is because they contain oxalates and / or phytates which reduce how much calcium your body can absorb from them.

Ideas for increasing your child's calcium intake

- Offer 3 portions of dairy foods / dairy alternatives every day to help meet your child's calcium requirements
- Add cheese / milk / milk alternative to mashed potato
- Offer calcium fortified cereal for breakfast with milk or a milk substitute
- Offer stir fry made with tofu and broccoli / spring greens for lunch or evening meal
- Add dairy / dairy free yogurt to fruit
- Use milk / milk alternative to make custard/milk puddings
- Offer glass of milk/milk alternative as a snack – can add milkshake syrup/powder to flavour
- Opt for calcium fortified bread when making toast / sandwiches
- Pasta can be cooked in milk / milk alternative in place of water

For further information please contact the Paediatric Dietitians on 0121 424 1674.

Accessibility

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