



Regal, Lakeside, and ADOC Medical Groups present:

Managing Your Calcium Levels and Bone Density

Calcium is a mineral that is needed for our heart, muscles and nerves to function properly, and for blood to clot. Low levels of calcium may contribute to the development of osteoporosis. This is a condition in which bones become weak and brittle and may result in low bone mass and high fracture and fall rates.

National studies have shown that most people do not get the calcium they need to grow and maintain healthy bones. This is critical because our bones support us and allow us to move and protect our brain, heart, and other organs from injury.

Eating foods rich in calcium and vitamin D, getting plenty of exercise, and practicing healthy habits help to keep our bones strong. To find out how much calcium you or a loved one need, see the Recommended Calcium Intake (in milligrams) chart below.

Recommended Calcium Intake	
1000 mg of calcium = 3 cups of milk, yogurt, or fortified orange juice	
Life-stage Group	mg/day
Infants 0 to 6 months	200
Infants 6 to 12 months	260
1 to 3 years old	700
4 to 8 years old	1,000
9 to 18 years old	1,300
19 to 30 years old	1,000
31 to 50 years old	1,000
51 to 70 year old males/females	1,000/1,200
70+ years old	1,200
Under 18 years old, pregnant/lactating	1,300
Over 18 years old, pregnant/lactating	1,000

Adapted from Calcium and Vitamin D: Important At any Age, National Institutes of Health, May 2015. Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, 2010.

Healthy Tips for You!

Healthy Tip #1

Eat calcium-rich foods. In addition to dairy products, enjoy fish with bones such as salmon, sardines, or whitebait.

Healthy Tip #2

Try weight-bearing exercises such as jogging, high-impact aerobics, and playing tennis. Be sure to clear exercise plans with your doctor.

Healthy Tip #3

Get your bone mineral density tested. An x-ray test called DEXA measures bone mineral density and helps determine risks of osteoporosis and fracture. Talk to your doctor about your need for this test.



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You can easily include more calcium in your daily diet without adding too much fat. Add some of these to your food plan:

- Dark leafy greens (kale, arugula, spinach)
- Fruits: figs, dried apricots, prunes, oranges, and kiwi
- Low-fat/non-fat cheese
- Milk and yogurt
- Fortified soy products
- Fortified cereals
- Okra
- Broccoli
- Almonds
- Canned fish

Calcium Supplements

If you have trouble getting enough calcium in your diet, you may need to take a calcium supplement. The amount of calcium you will need from a supplement depends on how much calcium you obtain from food sources. There are several different calcium compounds from which to choose; talk with your doctor about which dose and form may be right for you.

Calcium supplements are better absorbed when taken in small doses (500 mg or less) several times throughout the day. For many people, calcium supplements are better absorbed when taken with food. It is important to check supplement labels to ensure that the product meets United States Pharmacopeia (USP) standards.

Vitamin D

The body needs vitamin D to absorb calcium. Without enough vitamin D, one can't form enough of the hormone calcitriol (known as the "active vitamin D"). This, in turn, leads to insufficient calcium absorption from your diet. In this situation, the body must take calcium from its stores in the skeleton, which weakens existing bone and prevents the formation of strong, new bone.

You can get vitamin D in three ways: through the skin, from your diet, and from supplements. Experts recommend a daily intake of 600 IU (International Units) of vitamin D up to age 70. Men and women over age 70 should increase their intake to 800 IU daily, which also can be obtained from supplements or vitamin D-rich foods such as egg yolks, saltwater fish, liver, and fortified milk. Sometimes doctors prescribe higher doses for people who are deficient in vitamin D.

If You Are Lactose Intolerant

Lactose intolerance can lead to inadequate calcium intake as a result of having insufficient amounts of the enzyme, lactase, which is needed to break down the lactose found in dairy products. If you are lactose intolerant, dairy foods can be taken in small quantities or consumed with lactase enzyme supplements – typically sold as capsules or chewable tablets. Be sure to check the labels on milk products as some have already been treated with lactase.



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