



Calcium

WHAT IS IT?

Calcium is the most abundant mineral found in the human body. Calcium is not only important for bone health but is crucial for the ability of cells to transmit nerve impulses, contract muscles, and release hormones. It is very important to eat enough calcium-rich foods every day.

Calcium-rich food sources include dairy products, cruciferous vegetables (kale, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, brussels sprouts, mustard/turnip greens), soy, and certain grains. Foods such as spinach, rhubarb, chard, sweet potatoes and dried beans also contain calcium, although they also contain oxalic acid, which can decrease calcium absorption.

WHO MIGHT CONSIDER TAKING THIS?


Inadequate calcium consumption is prevalent in the US, with average dietary intakes of calcium well below the National Institute of Health's (NIH) adequate intake (AI) recommendations for almost every age and gender. In addition, calcium absorption efficiency can be quite low in certain conditions.

For example, your health care provider might recommend calcium supplements if you have:

- High blood pressure
- Osteoporosis
- Premenstrual syndrome
- Obesity
- Prediabetes or metabolic syndrome
- Cancer

You might also be at higher risk for inadequate calcium intake if you:

- Avoid dairy: e.g., are vegan, lactose intolerance, etc.
- Take certain medications: corticosteroids, aromatase inhibitors, tetracycline, and proton pump inhibitors

 **Calculate the amount of calcium you are getting from food: [Calcium Calculator](#)**

PREPARATIONS AND DOSAGE

Calcium is usually included in multivitamins. Some individuals may need additional supplementation. If taking calcium, take a maximum of 500 mg per dose, divide doses at least 6–8 hours apart, and take it apart from medications that might interfere with absorption (listed above).

DOSE: Dose ranges vary and should be recommended by your healthcare provider. Most adults do not need to supplement with more than 300–500 mg per day of calcium if they regularly consume calcium-rich foods. Calcium citrate doesn't need to be taken with food and is the form of choice for most due to its superior absorption.

Current recommendations for total daily calcium intake, which includes calcium from both food and supplemented sources are:

- Ages 1–3 years old: 700 mg per day
- Ages 4–8 years old: 1000 mg per day
- Ages 9–18 years old: 1300 mg per day
- Ages 19–50 years old: 1000 mg per day
- Ages 51–70 years old men: 1000 mg per day
- Ages 51–70 years old women: 1200 mg per day

CONCERNS?

There is some concern that high calcium intake may be associated with increased risk of prostate cancer and heart disease. Many experts recommend trying to meet daily requirements through diet rather than through the use of supplements. The NIH has set the upper tolerable limit (UL) for calcium at 2000–2500 mg per day. This is the absolute total you should get from all sources, including supplements and food.

Some calcium supplements can be constipating. Taking a calcium supplement that also contains magnesium can help reduce its constipating effects. Always check with your health care provider before using any supplement, and be sure to ask exactly how, when, and for how long you should take this product.