

Calcium Sources

Dietary Sources of Calcium

Pregnant and lactating women need 1000 mg/day of calcium. Most of the calcium in the body is found in the body's bones and teeth. One percent circulates in the blood to enhance nerve conduction, muscle contraction and blood clotting. If nutritional calcium intake is not adequate, calcium is taken from the bone to maintain blood calcium levels and osteoporosis may occur.

Milk/Mild Products (1 cup)	Ca in mg.	Fish (3 oz)	Ca in mg.
2% fat milk	352	Sardines, canned with bones	372
Skim milk (nonfat)	296	Salmon, canned with bones	167
Whole milk	288	Oysters	81
Plain yogurt	272		
Low-fat yogurt	452	Fruits	
Nonfat yogurt	451	Dried figs (5 medium)	135
Ice Cream	104	Almonds (10 g)	165
		Fruit juice – orange fortified	300
Cheese		Vegetables (1/2 cup)	
Swiss cheese	262	Broccoli	158
Cheddar	213	Collard greens	145
American	198	Dandelion greens	126
Edam	208	Spoon cabbage or bokchoy	126
Gruyere	287	Spinach, swiss chard or beet greens	0
Ricotta ½ cup	335	(unavailable due to oxylates)	

Other food sources of calcium are fortified breads and cereals. High fat dairy products should be avoided. Foods are the best source of usable calcium. Recent evidence indicates that calcium from supplements interferes with manganese, iron and thyroid medication absorption. Calcium from foods does not have that detrimental effect. Take calcium supplements under the supervision of your physician or a registered dietitian. If you are unable to obtain all the necessary calcium from foods, a combination of foods and a moderate amount of supplement may be the best therapy.

Calcium Supplements

Calcium carbonate gives you the largest percentage of usable calcium. Calcium carbonate should be taken with meals or snacks to increase absorption. Calcium absorption is dependent on an adequate level of vitamin D. Supplementation is not usually necessary because vitamin D is added to fortified milk and occurs in fish and eggs. It also occurs naturally in the skin by sunlight exposure 10 minutes/day. If you have a history of kidney stones or if calcium carbonate causes gas or constipation, try calcium citrate. Calcium citrate should be taken between meals for best absorption.

The following gives you a list of the various calcium products and the amount of usable calcium.

Calcium Carbonate		Calcium Citrate	
Generic Hi-Cal	500	Citracal	200
Oyster shell calcium	500		
Tums	200	Avoid Dolomite, Oyster shell and Bone Meal	
Tums extra strength\OS Cal	300	as they may contain heavy metals, including lead	
Viactiv chews	500		
Os Cal	500		