

Boosting Calcium Intake for Children and Adolescents

Calcium is an essential mineral required for building and maintaining strong, healthy bones and teeth. Poor calcium intake can lead to stunted growth and an increased risk of fractures later in life. Bone density starts to decline from young adulthood, therefore it's important to maximise calcium intake during childhood and adolescence.

How much calcium does my child need?

Toddlers 1-3 years	500mg
Children 4-8 years	700mg
Children 9-11 years	1000mg
Adolescents 12-18 years	1300mg

Calcium in food

It is recommended that daily calcium requirements are achieved through dietary sources where possible. Dairy products are a rich source of calcium. A simple way to ensure that you are getting enough calcium is to include three serves per day of dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt or cheese and 1 serve per day of other calcium-containing foods such as dark green leafy vegetables, tofu or nuts.

Food	Serving size	Calcium
Full cream milk or fortified soy/rice/nut milk	250ml (1 cup)	300mg
Yoghurt	200g (1 tub)	330mg
Cheese	40g (2 slices)	310mg

Non-dairy sources of calcium

There is a wide variety of dairy alternative milks available in Australia. High levels of calcium do not naturally occur in dairy alternative milks, therefore, look to purchase a calcium fortified milk aiming for a minimum of 120mg calcium per 100ml. In order to meet calcium requirements, try to include a range of other calcium-containing foods.

Food	Serving size	Calcium
Cocobella Active Yoghurt Pouch	110g pouch	124mg
Tahini	15g (1 tablespoon)	64mg
Nutri-Grain Cereal	40g (1 cup)	80mg
Uncle Toby's Plus Antioxidant	40g (1 cup)	80mg
Uncle Toby's Plus Omega 3	40g (1 cup)	160mg
Uncle Toby's Plus Calcium	40g (1 cup)	200mg
Almonds	45g (1/2 cup)	112mg
Tahini paste	15g (1 tablespoon)	64mg
Tinned salmon (with bones)	100g	203mg
Eggs	2 large (50g)	50mg
Raisins	1 small box (43g)	21.5mg
Orange	1 large (184g)	74mg
Soy bean curd (Tofu)	124g (1/2 cup)	434mg

Suggestions for boosting calcium intake

- Breakfast - try cereal with milk or porridge made with milk
- Smoothies - make with milk, yoghurt and fruit for a healthy snack
- Include cheese on sandwiches
- Try cheese served with crackers and/or dried fruit for calcium-rich snack
- Grate cheese over pasta, vegetables or soups
- Have yoghurt (no added sugar) for dessert or a pre-bed snack
- Include portion packs of yoghurt (no added sugar) in your child's lunch box
- Include milk as a drink
- Make protein balls using tahini and dried fruit for a quick calcium rich snack

Calcium supplements

Calcium supplementation is only required if a child is unable to meet their calcium requirements through dietary sources. This might be particularly so when requirements are very high (i.e. during adolescence) or if a child either dislikes or is unable to eat dairy foods and is unable to meet calcium requirements for their age through non-dairy calcium sources.

If calcium supplementation is recommended, supplementation should meet the age appropriate RDI for calcium. Calcium supplements are available without a prescription at pharmacies and supermarkets however your GP or dietitian can assist you on the most suitable supplement for your child. If possible, choose a calcium supplement with added vitamin D.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is required for calcium absorption. The majority of the body's vitamin D is formed in the skin when it is exposed to sunlight. It is recommended that the face and upper limbs be exposed to sunlight for 10-15 minutes most days of the week for normal vitamin D levels. Sun exposure should occur before 10am to limit exposure to harmful UV rays. If your child's vitamin D levels are low, your GP or dietitian can assist you on the most suitable supplement for your child.

Name and Phone: