

Your recommended daily calcium intake 1

You should have plenty of calcium in your daily food intake as part of a healthy balanced diet. Calcium is essential for building strong bones and preventing osteoporosis. It also helps the blood to clot and the muscles to work properly.

You should be able to get all the calcium you need in your diet. Speak to your doctor if you have other medical conditions such as osteoporosis as you may need to take calcium supplements. Check with your doctor before you start taking them. For more information on osteoporosis contact the National Osteoporosis Society – see ‘Other organisations’ below.

Recommended daily intake

Recommendations from the Department of Health for daily calcium intake for specific groups of people are in the table below.

Recommended daily calcium intake	
7-10 years (children)	550mg
11-18 years (girls)	800mg
11-18 years (boys)	1,000mg
19-50 years	700mg
50+ years	700mg
Pregnant women	700mg
Breastfeeding women	As above for age group plus another 550mg

Sources of calcium

The best sources of calcium are milk, cheese and other dairy products. Many people do not realise that skimmed milk actually contains more calcium than full fat milk.

Dairy products are not the only sources of calcium – you can reach the recommended amount per day by eating a variety of calcium-rich foods. See the table on the next page

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Calcium contents of foods

Food	Quantity	Calcium content	Food	Quantity	Calcium content
DAIRY			PULSES/OTHER		
Cheddar cheese	100ml	739mg	Sesame seeds	100g	670mg
Fruit yoghurt	100ml	122mg	Tofu	100g	330mg
Skimmed milk	100g	122mg	Red kidney beans	100g	71mg
Whole milk	100g	118mg	Baked beans	100g	53mg
FISH			CEREALS/BREADS		
Sardines in oil	100g	500mg	Ready Brek	100g	1,200mg
Salmon (tinned)	100g	91mg	White bread (may be calcium enriched)	100g	177mg
Tuna in oil (tinned)	100g	12mg	Wholemeal bread	100g	106mg
VEGETABLES			Special K	100g	70mg
Watercress	100g	170mg	FRUIT AND NUTS		
Curly kale (boiled)	100g	150mg	Figs (dried)	100g	250mg
Spinach (boiled)	100g	160mg	Apricots (dried)	100g	73mg
Spring greens	100g	75mg	Brazil nuts	100g	170mg

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How to get enough calcium

To help your body absorb the calcium from food, it is important to get enough vitamin D. We get vitamin D from sunlight on our skin and from foods such as margarines and spreads, breakfast cereals and oily fish. Try to get regular sunlight – taking care not to get sun burnt.

Here are some ideas on ways of including more calcium in your diet:

- use milk or yoghurt in recipes that call for water, such as soups and sauces
- for breakfast have a calcium fortified cereal with milk or baked beans on toast
- snack on nuts and dried fruits – both contain calcium.

Keep a record of the foods you eat and your daily calcium intake to help you keep track.

For more information on eating a healthy well-balanced diet as well as recipes visit the government's eat well website: www.eatwell.gov.uk

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Where can I get more information and support?

Arthritis Care is the UK's largest charity working with and for all people who have arthritis.

We are here to help you make positive choices through our information, website, self-management training, and professional helpline. Call the free helpline for confidential support on 0808 800 4050 (10am-4pm weekdays) or email: Helplines@arthritiscare.org.uk

You can find support from others with arthritis by joining our online discussion forums.

We rely on donations to fund our vital work in supporting people living with arthritis. If you would like to make a contribution, please phone us on 020 7380 6540 or you can donate online.

www.arthritiscare.org.uk

Other organisations

National Osteoporosis Society, Camerton, Bath BA2 0PJ
Email: info@nos.org.uk or call the helpline on 0845 450 0230.

Our factsheets are reviewed every 18 months. Please check our website for up to date information and reference sources or call 020 7380 6577.

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Note

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Contact us

For confidential information and support about treatments, available care and adapting your life, contact the Arthritis Care Helpline

Freephone: 0808 800 4050

10am-4pm (weekdays)

Email: Helplines@arthritiscare.org.uk

For information about Arthritis Care and the services we offer, contact us at: **www.arthritiscare.org.uk**

You can also talk to other people who are living with arthritis, through the discussion forums on our website.

Arthritis Care UK office and England regional services:

Tel: 020 7380 6500

Central England email: CentralEngland@arthritiscare.org.uk

North England email: NorthEngland@arthritiscare.org.uk

South England email: SouthEngland@arthritiscare.org.uk

Arthritis Care in Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9078 2940

Email: NIreland@arthritiscare.org.uk

Arthritis Care in Scotland

Tel: 0141 954 7776

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Arthritis Care in Wales

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