

Calcium for Bone Health

Milk, cheese and yogurt are nutrient-rich foods. Dairy products contribute a significant amount of nutrients to the diet. The calcium in dairy foods plays a major role in bone health, a top priority for staying strong and reducing the risk of broken bones and osteoporosis.



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Fast Facts

Q: Why is bone health important?

A: Estimates suggest that almost one-half of all women over the age of 50 will break a bone because they have osteoporosis. Calcium in the diet is important to build stronger, denser bones early in life and to keep bones strong and healthy.

Q: Why should dairy products be eaten every day?

A: The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend three servings of low-fat or fat-free milk or other dairy products every day to ensure an adequate intake of essential nutrients. Milk provides calcium, Vitamin D, and seven other essential nutrients to the diet. A healthy diet combined with 30 to 60 minutes of daily exercise will reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Q: What's in it for me?

A: Milk is the No. 1 dietary source of both calcium and Vitamin D in the American diet. Dairy foods are an excellent source of essential nutrients, including calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, protein and Vitamin D, that work together to protect bones. One cup of milk supplies 300 milligrams of bone-building calcium and 100 IU (international units) vitamin D. Three 8-ounce glasses of low-fat or fat-free milk daily provide most of the calcium and half of the daily recommended amounts for Vitamin D for adults.

It's easy: Pour low-fat milk on cereal for breakfast, top a sandwich or salad with cheese at lunch and snack on a carton of yogurt in the afternoon. Choose milk as the beverage with dinner each night to be sure to eat three every day.

Review the Research

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has released new dietary recommendations for calcium and Vitamin D intakes, known as Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs), used to guide consumers toward healthy dietary patterns. Citing a strong body of scientific evidence, the IOM has confirmed the importance of Vitamin D and calcium in promoting bone growth and maintenance throughout life. Adults need adequate amounts of these essential nutrients every day. Specifically, the committee recommended daily calcium intakes or Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs), of 1,000 milligrams daily for most adults for prevention of bone loss in the elderly. Daily Vitamin D intakes of 600 international units (IU) are now recommended.

Check it! Make a simple chart or notepad and ask family members to list all the milk, cheese and yogurt they eat for the next three days. Review your notes and encourage everyone to include three servings of dairy every day.

Choosing Three Servings Every Day

Milk, cheese and yogurt are easy to include in your every day diet. Choose reduced-fat, low-fat or fat-free options to fit nutrition needs.

Milk-- 8 ounces (1 cup)
Natural Cheese-- 1 1/2 ounces
Yogurt-- 8 ounces (1 cup)

It's quick and easy to get 3 Every Day! Drink milk with your meals, add cheese to sandwiches or salads and enjoy yogurt as a snack or dessert. To find recipes featuring Wisconsin cheese, milk and yogurt, visit www.EatWisconsinCheese.com or www.NationalDairyCouncil.org/recipes.