

# Bone Up On Calcium

## Why is calcium so important?

Calcium is vital for maximizing your bone density. We only build bone up to the age of around 25 years. After that, it stabilizes until around the age of 40 and then starts to decline (especially after menopause in women). If you don't have much bone built up, you're at risk for significant losses that can lead to broken bones later in life.

## How much calcium do I need?

Adolescents younger than 20 years old need 1300 mg /day. Adults 20-50 years old need 1000 mg /day. Adults older than 50, need 1200 mg / day. Women who are not menstruating need 1500 mg - they are at especially high risk for bone loss because they are low in estrogen, a hormone which is vital for bone health. If you have not gotten a period in 3 months or longer, consult a health professional immediately.

## How do I know if I'm getting enough?

You need **3** servings of calcium-rich foods to provide 1000 mg.

### One of the following foods provides one serving (about 300 mg calcium, or 30% RDA).

- 1, 8 oz. glass of milk, calcium fortified soy milk, or calcium fortified orange juice.
- 1, 6-8 oz. carton of yogurt
- 1 ½ oz. of cheese
- 1 cup pudding, custard, or flan
- 6 sardines with bones
- 1 Power Bar (or other sports bar that provides about 30% DV)
- 1 cup Total cereal (or other breakfast cereal with about 30% DV)

**How many servings of these foods do you consume per day?** \_\_\_\_\_

### Three of the following foods provides one serving (about 300 mg, or 30% RDA).

- ½ cup cottage cheese
- ½ cup cream soup
- ½ cup ice milk, frozen yogurt, or ice cream
- 1 cup dried beans or peas
- 2 oz. (1/2 can) canned fish with bones (salmon, mackerel)
- ½ cup tofu processed with calcium
- ¼ cup almonds
- ½ cup bok choy or turnip greens
- 1 cup broccoli, kale, or mustard greens
- 5 figs
- 2 corn tortillas
- 1 Tbsp. black strap molasses
- 2 Tbsp. nonfat cream cheese

**How many servings of these foods do you consume per day?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Divide by three, and add this to your number of servings from the above list.** \_\_\_\_\_

## What if I'm not getting enough calcium from food sources?

If you are not meeting your calcium needs with food sources, supplement with the difference. Calcium carbonate and calcium citrate are generally good supplement sources. Avoid sources made from bone meal, oyster shell, and dolomite, as they are more likely to be contaminated with heavy metals. Avoid taking more than 500 mg of calcium at one time, and avoid taking your calcium supplement at the same time as your multi with iron. Calcium and iron interfere with each other.