

Calcium: a key nutrient during pregnancy



Your body needs calcium to help keep your bones and teeth strong. It is important to get adequate calcium to maintain bone strength. Chronic calcium deficiency can cause osteoporosis and subsequently lead to an increased risk of fractures. During pregnancy, the body compensates by adjusting your calcium absorption from food; therefore, the daily recommended intake for calcium does not increase, as long as you meet the daily minimum requirements.

Recommended amount:

Through your daily diet and your prenatal vitamins, you should get 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium per day (1,300 mg if you are under 18 years of age). Prenatal vitamins alone do not provide enough calcium to meet your daily needs. If you do not or cannot get enough calcium from your food, consider calcium supplements.

How to add calcium to your daily diet:

The major food sources of calcium are dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt. However, if you are lactose intolerant or do not eat dairy, there are other food sources from which to choose. Aim for three servings from the dairy group each day. Here are a few tips on how to easily add calcium to your diet:

- Use milk in soups and oatmeal instead of broth or water
- Stock cheese sticks, yogurt cups and yogurt drinks (kefir) in your fridge for snacks
- Top fruit with yogurt
- Drink a cup of milk with a snack
- Sprinkle shredded cheese on veggies, omelets and other foods
- Add cheese slices to sandwiches

See our handy chart of healthy sources of calcium on the reverse side.

Dairy food sources of calcium (from highest to lowest mg)

Food	Serving	Calcium (mg)
Lactaid, fat-free calcium-fortified	1 cup	500
Plain yogurt	8 oz	452
Romano cheese	1.5 oz	452
Pasteurized, processed Swiss cheese	2 oz	438
Low-fat plain yogurt	8 oz	415
Low-fat fruit yogurt	8 oz	345
Swiss cheese	1.5 oz	336
Part-skim ricotta cheese	1/2 cup	335
Pasteurized, processed American cheese	2 oz	323
Provolone cheese	1.5 oz	321
Part-skim mozzarella cheese	1.5 oz	311
Cheddar cheese	1.5 oz	307
Fat-free (skim) milk	1 cup	306

Food	Serving	Calcium (mg)
Muenster cheese	1.5 oz	305
1% low-fat milk	1 cup	290
1% low-fat chocolate milk	1 cup	288
2% reduced fat chocolate milk	1 cup	285
2% reduced fat milk	1 cup	285
Low-fat buttermilk	1 cup	284
Chocolate milk	1 cup	280
Whole milk	1 cup	276
Whole milk plain yogurt	8 oz	275
Whole milk ricotta cheese	1/2 cup	255
Whole milk mozzarella cheese	1.5 oz	215
Feta cheese	1.5 oz	210
2% low-fat cottage cheese	1 cup	206

Non-dairy food sources of calcium

Food	Serving	Calcium (mg)
Fortified ready-to-eat cereals	1 oz	236-1043
Calcium-fortified soy beverage	1 cup	368
Atlantic sardines in oil, drained	3 oz	325
Firm tofu prepared with Nigari	1/2 cup	253
Canned pink salmon with bones	3 oz	181
Frozen cooked collard greens	1/2 cup	178
Blackstrap molasses	1 tablespoon	172
Frozen cooked spinach	1/2 cup	146
Cooked soybeans	1/2 cup	130

Food	Serving	Calcium (mg)
Frozen cooked turnip greens	1/2 cup	124
Atlantic perch	3 oz	116
Fortified instant oatmeal, plain and flavored	1 packet prepared	99-110
Cowpeas, cooked	1/2 cup	106
White beans, canned	1/2 cup	96
Frozen cooked kale	1/2 cup	90
Frozen cooked okra	1/2 cup	88
Canned clams	3 oz	78
Rainbow trout, farmed	3 oz	73

Adapted from USDA Nutrient Database Appendix B. Food Sources of Selected Nutrients.