

Strong Bones

Our bodies build bones until around age 30. After this age, bones continue to store calcium but do not grow. To keep bones strong, we need to eat and drink calcium-rich foods every day to replace the calcium used in our bodies.

Think of the calcium in your bones as a bank. You make a deposit each time you consume a food containing calcium. Because bones are living tissue, calcium is deposited and withdrawn daily as needed. Osteoporosis occurs when the calcium in bones is not replaced, making bones brittle.

To keep your bones strong throughout your lifetime:

- Eat foods rich in calcium and vitamin D
- Be physically active

How much do I need?

Ages 2-3	2 cup equivalents
Ages 4-8	2 ½ cup equivalents
Ages 9+	3 cup equivalents

What counts as a cup equivalent?

- 1 cup milk or yogurt
- 1 ½ oz. cheese
- 2 oz. processed cheese (American)
- 1 cup soy milk fortified with calcium and vitamin D
- 1/3 cup shredded cheese
- 2 cups cottage cheese

Non-dairy Alternatives

For individuals who choose dairy alternatives, fortified soy milk and yogurt are great options because their nutrition content is similar to dairy milk and yogurt.

Other non-dairy foods high in calcium:

- Calcium-fortified juices and plant-based milk alternatives
- Canned fish (sardines, salmon) with bones
- Tofu made with calcium
- Some leafy greens (spinach, kale, collard)

Vitamin D

The body needs vitamin D to absorb calcium. You can get vitamin D in three ways: through the skin from sunlight, from the diet, and from supplements. Very few foods naturally contain vitamin D.

Foods that provide vitamin D

- Fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, trout, and sardines
- Fortified milk (both dairy and non-dairy)
- Fortified orange juice
- White mushrooms
- Fortified cereal
- Eggs

Type of Milk	%DV Calcium	%DV Vitamin D	Grams of fat
Whole			
Reduced fat (2%)			
Low-fat (1%)			
Non-fat (skim)			
Soy			
Light soy			

Add to your bone bank. List some ideas for including both calcium and vitamin D in your meals and snacks. Your body can only absorb so much calcium at a time, so it's best to spread your calcium-rich foods throughout the day.

Breakfast

Dinner

Lunch

Snacks

Funded in part by the USDA SNAP. For more information, call MU Extension's Show Me Nutrition line at 1-888-515-0016. Need help stretching your food dollars? Contact your local resource center or go online to mydss.mo.gov/food-assistance