

Adolescent-Young Adult Medicine

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CALCIUM: THE “STRONG BONES” MINERAL

CALCIUM is best known for its role in building and maintaining strong bones. Adolescence and young adulthood is a time of accelerated bone formation and strengthening. Peak bone mass (strength and density) is generally achieved before age 30. Therefore, sufficient intake of calcium (from food and/or supplements) during the teen and young adult years is critical to building the strongest bones possible before they begin to gradually lose strength later in life. In addition to calcium, Vitamin D (from fortified foods and sunshine!), weight-bearing exercise, and adequate body weight (resulting in normal levels of sex hormones, estrogen or testosterone) contribute to bone strength. Excessive intake of caffeine and alcohol and smoking cigarettes may decrease bone density.

**ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS SHOULD AIM TO HAVE
AT LEAST 1300 MG. OF CALCIUM PER DAY (from food and/or supplements).**

Dairy products are the best source of dietary calcium and Vitamin D, but *other foods are good sources* too...and don't forget about orange juice and cereals fortified with calcium and Vitamin D. Consult *The Complete Book of Vitamin and Mineral Counts* (and *The Complete Book of Food Counts*), both by Corinne Netzer, to find out the content of all nutrients (including calcium) in many, many foods. Check the *Nutrition Facts Label* on packaged foods to find out which items provide a high percentage of your daily calcium requirement.

Good sources of calcium include:

300-400 mg.	200-300 mg.	100-200 mg.
1 cup milk, fortified OJ	½ cup tofu	¾ cup broccoli
fortified cereal (Total)	3 oz. almonds	spinach
2 oz. cheese: parmesan, Swiss,	10 dried figs	kale
cheddar, mozzarella, American	2 TB Blackstrap	½ cup collard greens
3 oz. sardines	molasses	walnuts

IF YOU NEED A CALCIUM SUPPLEMENT...because you don't like calcium-rich foods (like dairy), are lactose intolerant (and don't use lactaid milk and lactaid pills), or have a medical reason...then *BY ALL MEANS A TEENAGER OR YOUNG ADULT SHOULD TAKE ONE*...and here are a few things to know about supplements:

- Can be tablet, capsule, chewable chocolate (Adora or Viactiv), Tums
- Check for the USP Pharmacopeia label which means it *dissolves well*
- Check for the number of *mg. of elemental calcium* (not of the compound)
- Take several times/day, if necessary, and maximum 600 mg per dose
- Best absorbed with a meal, but NOT when taken together with an iron supplement
- Calcium carbonate (Caltrate, Os-Cal, Tums, Viactiv) is least expensive but more likely to cause gas, bloating and constipation
- Calcium citrate (Citracal) is better absorbed and less likely to cause gas, bloating and constipation
- Choose a calcium supplement that *also contains Vitamin D* (>400 IU)
- Try *Adora*...delicious! www.adoracalcium.com