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## BONE HEALTH

### Children and teenagers

**Childhood is an important time for building strong, healthy bones, and getting enough calcium is an essential part of this.** Teenage years in particular are crucial for bone building, so calcium requirements are high at this time. Bones are growing in both length and strength; around 90% of the adult skeleton is formed by the age of 18.

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey reported that 15% of all 11-18 year olds are not getting enough calcium from their food. This figure is higher for girls – almost 20%.

### Adults

**An adequate calcium intake is important throughout adult life.** Although the majority of our skeleton is laid down during the teenage years, bones continue to strengthen until our mid-thirties. After this, we naturally begin to lose bone, and for women there is a marked increase in bone loss around the time of the menopause. The loss of bone as we age can eventually result in fragile bones which are at an increased risk of fracture. Getting enough calcium is important for both men and women throughout our later years to help keep bones healthy.



## PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING

During pregnancy, a woman's body will change to absorb more calcium from the food she eats, so her recommended calcium intake isn't any higher than before pregnancy. **But it is still important to get enough calcium in her diet to help build strong, healthy bones in her developing baby.**

During breastfeeding, the demands for calcium are higher and breastfeeding women need an additional 550mg of calcium a day (see p14/15).

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## A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

**Other nutrients in a balanced diet including protein and vitamin D are also important for bone health.**

And healthy bones need regular exercise to keep them strong too; like muscles, bones suffer if they're not used.

Weight-bearing activities, where our feet and legs support our weight, are particularly good for bones; these include running, skipping and dancing – even brisk walking. We should aim for 2½ hours per week.

Quitting smoking and limiting alcohol intake is also good for bone health.

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## DAIRY FOODS & CALCIUM

Including milk, cheese and yogurt in the diet is a great way to help meet our calcium needs. Dairy foods contribute the most calcium to the UK diet, and the calcium they contain is easy for the body to absorb and use.

The table on the next page shows the recommended calcium intake at different ages, and the portion sizes of dairy that can help meet these needs.

It's not just calcium that milk, hard cheese and yogurt provide; they also contain protein and phosphorus, both of which help keep bones strong and healthy.

**Breastfeeding women**  
As listed for age group plus another 550mg

**18 years and under**  
800 + 550 = 1350mg/day  
**19 years and over**  
700 + 550 = 1250mg/day

The Department of Health recommends that **children under two need whole milk and full-fat cheese and yogurt. If they're over two, they can have semi-skimmed milk and lower-fat dairy products if they are good eaters and growing well. Skimmed and 1% milk are not suitable for children under five.**

\* RNI, Reference Nutrient Intake, is a figure set by the Department of Health for the amount of a nutrient that is enough to meet the dietary needs of most people (97.5%).

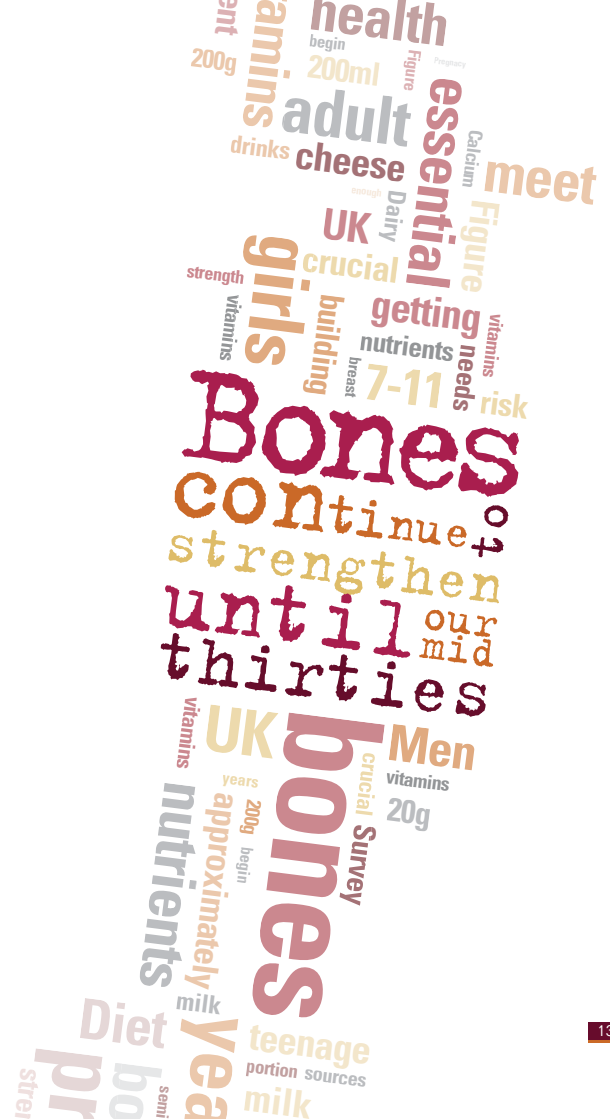
Age	Calcium needs (RNI*, mg/day)	Portion sizes	Calcium content mg
1-3 years	350	100ml (1/2 adult glass) whole/semi-skimmed milk	120
		80g (2 tablespoons) whole plain yogurt	160
		15g (small cube) hard cheese	111
		<b>These portion sizes provide approximately 391 mg of calcium</b>	
4-6 years	450	189ml (1/3 pint) semi-skimmed milk	227
		80g (2 tablespoons) whole plain yogurt	160
		20g (2 tablespoons grated) hard cheese	148
		<b>These portion sizes provide approximately 535mg of calcium</b>	
7-10 years	550	189ml (1/3 pint) semi-skimmed milk	227
		125g pot low-fat plain yogurt	203
		20g (2 tablespoons grated) reduced-fat hard cheese	168
		<b>These portion sizes provide approximately 600mg of calcium</b>	
11-18 years Male	1000	284ml (1/2 pint) semi-skimmed milk	341
		200g (5 tablespoons) low-fat plain yogurt	324
		45g (sandwich portion) reduced-fat hard cheese	378
		<b>These portion sizes provide approximately 1043mg of calcium</b>	
11-18 years Female	800	250ml (large glass) semi-skimmed milk	300
		200g (5 tablespoons) low-fat plain yogurt	280
		30g (small matchbox) reduced-fat hard cheese	252
		<b>These portion sizes provide approximately 832mg of calcium</b>	
19 years and over	700	200ml (glass) semi-skimmed milk	240
		150g pot low-fat plain yogurt	243
		30g (small matchbox) reduced-fat hard cheese	252
		<b>These portion sizes provide approximately 735mg of calcium</b>	

## OTHER FOOD SOURCES OF CALCIUM

- Oily fish with soft edible bones such as sardines and pilchards
- Calcium-fortified drinks including soya drinks and fortified orange juices
- Calcium-fortified soya and rice desserts
- Tofu
- Some nuts and seeds – including almonds, brazil nuts, hazelnuts and sesame seeds
- Dried figs
- Okra
- Some types of beans and peas
- White bread
- Kale

A balanced and varied diet should provide enough calcium to meet our requirements. If you take a calcium supplement, make sure your total intake doesn't exceed 1500mg/day as this may cause stomach pain and diarrhoea.

Children under five years old shouldn't be given whole nuts because of the risk of choking. People with a medically diagnosed allergy to any of the above foods should avoid them.







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For details on additional information sources  
please contact The Dairy Council

The  
**Dairy** Council

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