

Calcium

What Is Calcium?

Calcium is a mineral that builds strong bones. It helps the body in lots of other ways too. Calcium keeps the nerves and muscles working. It also plays a role in keeping the heart healthy.

Why Do Kids Need Calcium?

We only get one chance to build strong bones — when we're kids and teens. Children who get enough calcium start their adult lives with the strongest bones possible. That protects them against bone loss later in life.

Young kids and babies need calcium and vitamin D to prevent a disease called **rickets**. Rickets softens the bones and causes bow legs, stunted growth, and sometimes sore or weak muscles.

Where Does Calcium Come From?

Calcium is found in food. Some foods are very high in calcium. Dairy foods like these are among the best natural sources of calcium:

- milk
- yogurt
- hard cheeses, like cheddar

The percentage of fat in milk and other dairy foods doesn't affect their calcium content — nonfat, 1%, 2%, or whole all have about the same amount of calcium. Your health care provider will let you know which type of milk is right for your child.

Some kids can't eat dairy. They have to get calcium from other foods, such as:

- calcium-set tofu
- calcium-fortified soy drinks
- edamame (soybeans)
- broccoli, collard greens, kale, chard, Chinese cabbage, and other leafy greens
- almonds and sesame seeds
- white beans, red beans, and chickpeas
- oranges, figs, and prunes

Because calcium is so important, food companies often add it to cereal, bread, juice, and other kid-friendly foods.

How Much Calcium Does My Child Need?

Calcium is measured in milligrams (mg). We need different amounts at different stages of life. It's best if kids get most of their calcium from food. If that's not possible, health care providers might suggest a calcium supplement.

Babies

Babies get their calcium from breast milk or formula:

- Babies younger than 6 months old need 200 mg of calcium a day.
- Babies 6 to 11 months old need 260 mg of calcium a day.

The only types of milk babies should have are breast milk or formula. Don't give cow's milk, goat's milk, or homemade formula to babies younger than 1 year old.

Kids and Teens

Kids need more calcium as they get older to support their growing bones:

- Kids 1 to 3 years old need 700 mg of calcium a day (2–3 servings).
- Kids 4 to 8 years old need 1,000 mg of calcium a day (2–3 servings).
- Kids and teens 9 to 18 years old need 1,300 mg of calcium a day (4 servings).

How Can I Help My Child Get Enough Calcium?

Babies get all their calcium from breast milk or formula. Young kids and school-age kids who eat a healthy diet with plenty of dairy also get enough. But preteens and teens may need to add more calcium-rich foods to their diet.

Try these tips to make sure kids and teens get enough calcium:

- Make parfaits with layers of plain yogurt, fruit, and whole-grain cereal.
- Make smoothies with fresh fruit and low-fat milk or calcium-fortified soy or almond milk.
- Add fresh fruit or unsweetened apple butter to cottage cheese or yogurt.
- Add a drop of strawberry or chocolate syrup to regular milk. Avoid store-bought flavored milk drinks because they can have a lot of sugar.
- Sprinkle low-fat cheese on top of snacks and meals.
- Add white beans to favorite soups.
- Add sesame seeds to baked goods or sprinkle on vegetables.
- Serve hummus with cut-up vegetables.
- Add tofu to a stir-fry.
- Use almond butter instead of peanut butter.
- Serve edamame as a snack.

- Top salads or cereals with chickpeas and slivered almonds.
- Serve more dark green, leafy vegetables (such as broccoli, kale, collard greens, or Chinese cabbage) with meals.

Kids who can't eat dairy may not get enough calcium. If your child has lactose intolerance, a milk allergy, or eats a vegan diet, talk to your health care provider about calcium and vitamin D.

What About Vitamin D?

People need vitamin D to help the body absorb calcium. Without it, calcium can't get where it needs to go to build strong bones.

Vitamin D isn't in many foods that kids eat. So, health care providers often recommend supplements.

Breastfed babies need a vitamin D supplement, starting soon after birth. Baby formula has vitamin D added, so babies who drink more than 32 ounces of formula a day don't need extra vitamin D.

Ask your health care provider if your baby or child needs a vitamin D supplement.

Medically reviewed by: Mary L. Gavin, MD

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What Is Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is a nutrient that helps the body take in calcium from the foods that we eat. Together, calcium and vitamin D build bones and keep them strong. Vitamin D also plays a part in heart health and fighting infection.

Why Do Kids Need Vitamin D?

Kids need vitamin D to [build strong bones](#). Vitamin D also [helps bones heal](#) after an injury or surgery.

Where Does Vitamin D Come From?

The Sun

Our bodies make vitamin D when our skin is exposed to the sun. It's hard to get enough vitamin D from the sun, though. Most kids and adults spend lots of time indoors at school and work. When outdoors, it's important to [protect skin](#) to

prevent skin cancer and skin damage from too much sun exposure.

Food

Very few foods have vitamin D naturally. The foods with the most are fatty fish (like salmon and tuna), liver, eggs and fish oils. Kids don't eat these foods a lot. That's why food companies add vitamin D to milk, yogurt, baby formula, juice, cereal, and other foods.

Adding vitamin D to foods is called "fortifying." It's helpful, but it still may not be enough.

Supplements

To get enough vitamin D, children often need to take a multivitamin with vitamin D or a vitamin D supplement. Vitamin D is sometimes labeled as vitamin D3.



You can buy vitamin D pills, gummies, chewables, liquids, and sprays in stores without a prescription. Ask your child's health care provider for advice on choosing the right one.

How Much Vitamin D Does My Child Need?

Vitamin D is measured in international units (IU).

- **Babies younger than 1 year old need 400 IU**

of vitamin D a day. Baby formula has 400 IU per liter, so babies who drink at least 32 ounces of formula each day get enough. If your baby drinks only breast milk or gets less than 32 ounces of formula each day, ask your health care provider about giving your baby a vitamin D supplement.

- **Kids older than 1 year need 600 IU or more of vitamin D a day.** Health care providers often want healthy kids to take 600 to 1,000 IU daily.

Some kids might need more vitamin D, such as those who:

- have certain medical problems (for instance, [obesity](#), [celiac disease](#), [cystic fibrosis](#), multiple fractures, or bone pain)
- are healing from bone surgery (such as after [fusion surgery for scoliosis](#))
- are taking medicines (like anti-seizure medicines) that block the way the body uses vitamin D

Your health care provider can talk to you about whether your child needs a vitamin D supplement.

How Can I Help My Child Get Enough Vitamin D?

Because vitamin D is so important, you'll want to be sure your child gets enough. Giving your child a daily supplement or a multivitamin with vitamin D is the easiest way to do this.

Health care providers might order a blood test if they think a health problem is keeping a child from getting enough vitamin D. If doctors don't think your child has a health problem, there's no need for a blood test.

What About Calcium?

Vitamin D helps the body absorb [calcium](#), a building block for strong bones. Unlike with vitamin D, kids usually can get enough calcium from food. High-calcium foods include milk, cheese, and yogurt. Food makers often fortify foods like cereal, bread, or juice with calcium.

Reviewed by: [Richard W. Kruse, DO](#) and [Susan M. Dubowy, PA-C](#)

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Calcium/Vitamin D

Post Test – March 2025

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You do not need to send it in to our office or the State.**

1. Calcium is a _____ that builds strong bones and helps in keeping the heart healthy.
2. Young kids and babies need calcium and vitamin D to prevent a disease called _____, that can soften the bones.
3. The percentage of fat in milk and other dairy foods affects their calcium content-nonfat, 1%, 2% or whole all have different amounts of calcium. True or False?
4. Kids need more calcium as they get older to support their growing bones. Kids 4 to 8 years old need _____ of calcium a day.
5. If your child has _____, a milk allergy or eats a vegan diet, talk to your health care provider about calcium and vitamin D.
6. Our bodies make vitamin D when our skin is exposed to the sun. It's easy to get enough vitamin D from the sun. True or False?
7. Very few foods have vitamin D _____. Adding vitamin D to foods is called _____.
8. Baby formula has 400 IU per liter, so babies who drink at least _____ of formula each day get enough.
9. Some kids might need more vitamin D, such as those who have certain medical problems such as _____, celiac disease, and cystic fibrosis, multiple fractures or bone pain.
10. Vitamin D helps the body _____ calcium, a building block for strong bones. Unlike vitamin D, kids can get enough calcium from food.

February 2025 Quiz Answers. 1.Independent 2.True 3.Potty 4.Expressively
5.Clap/Sing 6.False 7.Literacy Skills 8.Mealtime 9.Car/Bag 10.Role Model



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