

Calcium and Vitamin D

Provided by your Neighborly Care Network Dietitian

Why is calcium important?

Calcium is the major mineral found in our bones and teeth. Many older adults don't get enough calcium from the foods they eat. This can lead to bone loss and the bone disease osteoporosis, which puts people at a high risk for bone fractures.

What foods contain calcium?

- Dairy foods
(milk, yogurt, cheese, and ice cream)
- Kale and many other greens
- Romaine lettuce
- Broccoli
- Legumes (like kidney beans & lentils)
- Tofu
- Nuts

How much calcium do I need?

The new recommended intake for men and women 51 years of age and older is 1,200 milligrams (mg) of calcium every day. If you are not getting enough calcium from foods, you may need to take a calcium supplement. Talk to your doctor or dietitian for more information.

Why do we need Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is needed for normal absorption of calcium and phosphorus. It also helps put these minerals into bones and teeth, making them stronger. We need more vitamin D as we get older.

What happens if we don't get enough Vitamin D?

Lack of vitamin D affects bones. In growing children, not getting enough vitamin D can lead to rickets. Adults who are vitamin D deficient have a high risk of softening of the bones (osteomalacia). They also can lose bone mass, which leads to brittle bones (osteoporosis).

How can we get enough Vitamin D?

We can get vitamin D from two sources – sunlight and food.

Sunlight: When exposed to sunlight, the skin makes a compound that is converted to vitamin D in the liver and kidneys.

Food: Most fluid milk is fortified with vitamin D. People who drink milk every day probably get enough vitamin D. Eggs, sardines, and salmon contain vitamin D. Fortified breakfast cereals, breads, and orange juice also may contain this vitamin.