

Calcium Intake

Calcium: What is it?

Calcium, the most abundant mineral in the human body, has several important functions. More than 99% of the total body calcium is stored in the bones and teeth. The remaining 1% is found throughout the body in blood and muscle. Specifically when you are an athlete, you **need** to be concerned about getting enough calcium EVERY DAY! If you do not get enough calcium, you will weaken your bones and slow down important muscle functions. You will also increase your risk of stress fractures and osteoporosis.

How much calcium do I need?

90% of total calcium deposited before 18 years of age

- 4-8 years: 800 mg/day calcium (about 2 cups of milk/ day)
- 9-18 years: 1300 mg/day calcium (about 4 cups of milk/day)
- 19-50 years: 1000 mg/day calcium (about 3 cups of milk/day)

Which foods provide the best source of calcium for my body?

Dairy foods such as milk, yogurt, and cheese provide the best source of calcium in the typical American diet:

1 cup of milk (whole or low fat)	300 mg calcium
1.5 slices of cheese	300 mg calcium
1 cup calcium fortified orange juice	300 mg calcium
1 cup yogurt	300 mg calcium
1 cup fortified soy or rice milk	300 mg calcium *good choice for vegetarians
1 package of Nestle Carnation Instant Breakfast	250 mg calcium
½ cup cooked spinach	120 mg calcium
½ cup cooked broccoli	35 mg calcium

Many other foods, including cereal and graham crackers, may also be fortified with calcium and can help boost your daily intake of calcium. If a food package states it is “high in calcium” or “excellent source” of calcium, it will contain about 200 mg of calcium per serving. If a package states it is a “good source” of calcium, each serving will contain about 100-150 mg of calcium.

Which are the best calcium supplements for my body?

If you cannot meet your daily calcium needs with diet alone, please consider taking a calcium supplement. Most calcium supplements, such as Tums, Viactiv and Adora contain 500 mg calcium per serving. Viactiv and Adora (found at Target and King Soopers) are available in chocolate and other flavors. Please be sure to double check the nutrition facts label to determine the amount of calcium in each supplement.

Please feel free to contact the SPARCC Sports Medicine Clinic for any further questions regarding calcium intake or a sports nutrition referral with a sports nutritionist.

References:

Children’s Hospital Colorado Sports Medicine Program for young athletes
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Medical Society of Sports Medicine