



Bone-Up on Calcium

Is Osteoporosis in Your Future?

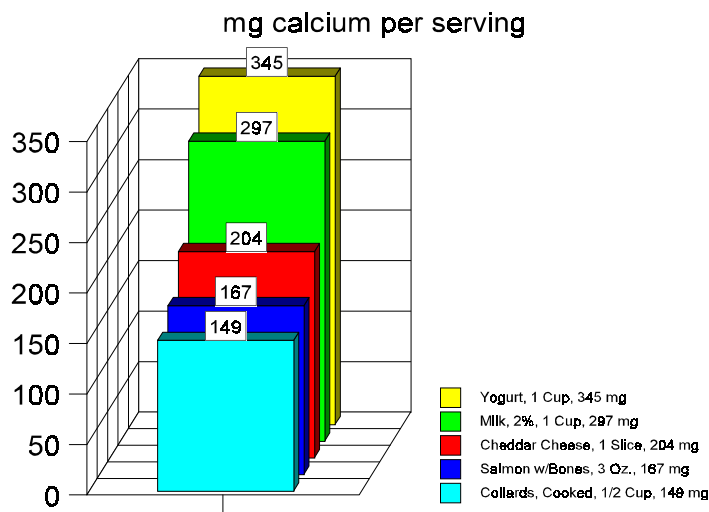
At a Glance...

- Osteoporosis means *porous bone*.
- After age 35, bones begin to lose calcium.
- The disease is seen most often in small-framed, light-skinned postmenopausal women.
- Osteoporosis is easier to prevent than to treat.

People are living longer, fuller lives as we approach the year 2000. Like any structure, the human body needs a good frame to weather the years. The skeletal system of bones and cartilage is that frame. People begin building their frames as babies and continue to build bones until they are 30 or so. After that time, bones take pretty good care of themselves until we reach our later years. Sometime after the age of 35, bones start to decrease in size. They become more brittle and may become porous. The term osteoporosis means *porous bone*. As you might guess, these bones are easier to break and don't support the rest of the body very well. People with osteoporosis often have a more stooping posture and may become shorter as they age.

It takes a lifetime to develop bad bones, but only a few years to build good ones. Once bone structure is established in young adults, they need some maintenance. Calcium and regular exercise are important to keep bones sound and strong. It's not easy to get enough calcium without milk or dairy foods. There are some vegetables which contain small amounts of calcium. There are also juices and cereals which are calcium-fortified. The chart on the left shows some foods which can help you get the recommended amount of calcium each day.

Calcium Sources



Special Needs

Women Aged to Perfection

Women who are past menopause are at greatest risk of developing porous bones. Based on current research, it appears that *estrogen replacement therapy* helps prevent osteoporosis and may offer some other benefits as well. Estrogen replacers are

usually taken to help decrease the symptoms of menopause. But in recent years scientists have discovered that estrogen reduces bone loss associated with aging and may reduce the risk of heart disease.

Exercise

Regular physical activity is good for bones. Bones need to be supported by well-toned muscles. Exercise also decreases risk of heart disease and may help improve mental health.

Lactose Intolerance

If milk doesn't agree with you, try other low-fat dairy foods—such as yogurt or cottage cheese. Also, try gradually adding small amounts of milk back into your diet. If these ideas don't work, there are products available commercially to add to milk to make it more easily digested.

Young Women

As children, we eat what our parents or caretakers feed us. But when we start to make our own decisions about what to eat and drink, there is less milk and more soda. There's nothing wrong with drinking soda as long as there's also enough calcium in the diet. (And as long as calories aren't a concern if the soda is not diet.)

Calcium Supplements

Foods are the best way to get the calcium needed by the body. There are some new calcium-fortified foods, such as calcium-fortified orange juice. As well, there are some new fluid milk products that are calcium-enriched. If the diet does not contain enough calcium, supplements should be considered.

If you choose a supplement, calcium carbonate is well-absorbed. But supplements such as oyster shells are not good calcium sources.

Cooking with Calcium

Milk, cheese and yogurt can add calcium to many foods.

- ☛ Use yogurt and milk to make salad dressings.
- ☛ Try non-fat dry milk in casseroles, meat loaf and baked goods.
- ☛ Use milk in cream soups (homemade or canned).
- ☛ Add cheese and cottage cheese to casseroles, lasagna and salads.

How Much Calcium Do We Need?	
Age Group	Calcium (mg)
Teens	1,300
Adults Ages 19-50	1,000
Adults Ages 51+	1,200

References

- *Osteoporosis-Bone-Up*. Mayo Clinic Newsletter, May 1997.
- *Dietary Guidelines*. USDA-HHS, 1995.
- *Dairy Council Digest*, May-June, 1997.

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