

how much CALCIUM IS ENOUGH?



Calcium is an essential nutrient for bone health. It is very important in the prevention of osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become weak and brittle. This makes them more susceptible to fractures. The bulk of bone mass is achieved in the first 2 decades of your life. It is therefore important to start building up bone mass when young to prevent osteoporosis later in life.

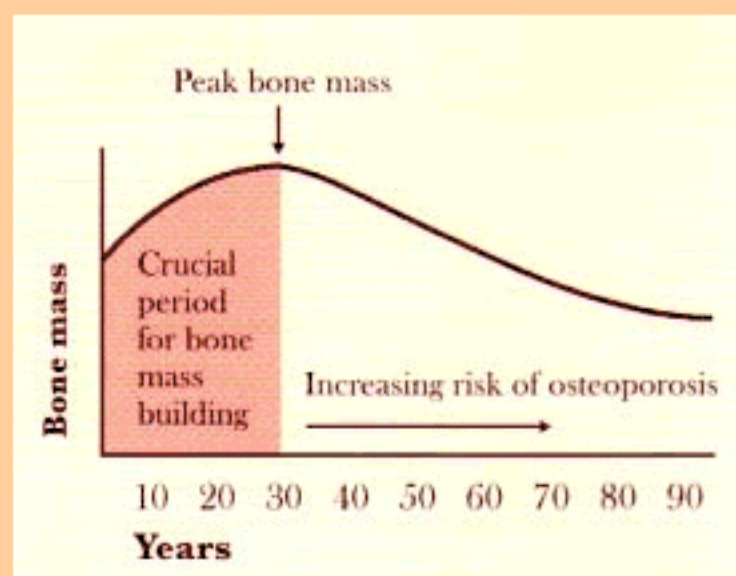
How much calcium do you need?

The table below shows how much calcium you need at different ages:

Age (years)	Calcium (mg)	Vitamin D (IU)
7-9	700	100
10-18	1 000	100
19-50	800	100
51 and above	1 000	100

Those aged between 10 to 18 years need more calcium of about 1000mg a day as this is the time when up to 60% of total bone mass is achieved. **Peak** bone mass is achieved by about 30 years of age. After that, gradual loss of bone mass takes place. So, it is important to accumulate as much bone mass as possible while young and take enough calcium thereafter to slow down the loss of bone mass.

Post menopausal women experience a rapid decline in bone mass in the first few years after menopause. Although this loss slows down somewhat, it tends to continue throughout the post-menopausal years. Men lose bone mass as they age too, though they have a lower risk of osteoporosis. Elderly women and men therefore have to increase their daily calcium intake to prevent osteoporosis.



Another group who has increased calcium requirements is pregnant or breastfeeding women. They need to take 1000mg of calcium as well as 400IU of vitamin D a day.

How do you make sure you get enough calcium?

Eating a well-balanced diet is the best way. Here are some sources of calcium from the four main food groups:

Food group	No of servings a day	Calcium sources
Rice and alternatives	5-7	Calcium enriched breads, cereals, noodles
Vegetables	2	Green leafy vegetables
Fruits	2	Calcium fortified juices
Meat and alternatives	2-3	Milk, cheese, yoghurt, ikan bilis, sardines with bones, dhal, tofu, high calcium soya bean milk



Don't forget to get enough vitamin D too. Vitamin D helps to absorb calcium and deposit it in the bones. Sunlight is the best source. Try to get at least 30 minutes of sunshine a day. Don't forget the sunscreen!

If you are unable to get adequate amounts of calcium and vitamin D in the usual ways, talk to your doctor about supplements. He will be able to advise you on what type of supplements to take and how much.

What else can you do to protect your bones?

Remember to:

- exercise regularly
- avoid smoking
- limit alcohol intake

Take care of your bones now. Make sure you have a well balanced diet that is rich in calcium. Build strong bones for life!