

Extension

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For Growing Bones: Calcium and Vitamin D

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Serve calcium-rich foods for your child's growing bones and teeth. These same nutrients help adult bones stay healthy. Children and teens that do not get enough calcium are at high risk for developing osteoporosis (weak, brittle bones) later in life. Calcium may even play a role in preventing high blood pressure in children and adults.

Calcium is found in many foods, but the most common source is milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soymilk. Other food sources include beans, Tofu, canned sardines or canned salmon (canned with bones), almonds, spinach, broccoli, turnip greens and kale. Calcium is sometimes added to orange juice, bread, and cereal.

To build strong bones serve low fat and fat-free milk and other calcium products several times a day. Children ages 2 – 3 need 2 cups of milk or equivalent calcium products each day. Children ages 4 – 8 years old need 2 ½ cups of milk or equivalent calcium products each day. Older children, teens, and adults need 3 cups a day.

Vitamin D is needed for normal absorption of calcium and phosphorus. It helps put these minerals into bones and teeth. Growing children who do not get enough Vitamin D can develop bones that can't support their weight.

We get Vitamin D from sunlight, food and supplements. We need 10 – 15 minutes of direct sun on our face and arms, without sunscreen, two to three times a week to make enough Vitamin D. Food sources of Vitamin D include fortified milk and yogurt, fortified orange juice, salmon, sardines, and shrimp. It is hard to get enough Vitamin D from food. If your health care professional recommends a calcium or Vitamin D supplement be sure to ask for a recommendation on amount and type, because they differ in absorbability and effectiveness.

Tips for Success:

- Combine yogurt, low-fat milk and fruit in a blender for a delicious smoothie.
- Prepare hot cereal with low fat milk instead of water.
- Top pancakes with yogurt and fruit instead of syrup.
- Serve ice-cold low fat or fat-free milk instead of soda.
- Mix 1 cup of plain yogurt with taco seasoning or ranch dressing mix for a delicious vegetable dip.
- Toss 2 tablespoons of freshly grated Parmesan cheese with fat-free microwave popcorn.
- Many cheeses are high in saturated fat. Look for "reduced-fat" or "low-fat" on the label.
- Flavored milks, fruit yogurts, frozen yogurt, ice cream and puddings can contain a lot of added sugars. These added sugars are empty calories, so serve them only occasionally.



Let's Talk:

Parents who drink milk and eat calcium rich foods are a role model for their children. They show the children that it is important to take care of your bones and teeth. Children ages 1 - 2 years need whole milk to grow and develop properly. Starting at age 2, children can drink low fat milk. It is a good habit for your whole family to learn. Drinking low fat milk is one way to get less fat. Change slowly to low fat or fat-free milk. Switch first from whole to 2% milk. When you and your child become used to the flavor, shift to low fat or fat-free milk.

Recipe for Health:

Calcium Loaded Baked Potato

Ingredients:

- 1 (16-ounce) package frozen broccoli, cauliflower and carrot blend, cooked, drained
- 2 cups, 2% Milk, Reduced Fat Sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded and divided
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 8 hot baked potatoes, split in half

Toss the hot vegetables with 1 cup of the cheese and pepper. Spoon about 1/3 cup of the vegetable mixture over each potato; sprinkle evenly with remaining cheese.

Recipe and photo from www.nationaldairycouncil.org

