



## Make sure you get enough calcium

### I just turned 50. Do I need to increase my calcium intake?

Actually, it's at age 51 when the Recommended Dietary Allowance for calcium increases from 1,000 milligrams a day (advised for men and women ages 19 to 50) to 1,200 milligrams. But you may want to consider increasing calcium consumption now.

According to a recent study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, many Americans across a wide range of age groups simply don't get enough calcium.

The study takes into account calcium intake from both food and supplements. The researchers examined data from 9,475 adults participating in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey in 2003 to 2006. Among their findings: Even though calcium intake, through both food and supplements, was highest among those over age 50, it still wasn't enough to meet recommended levels. Calcium intake was lowest among those 81 and older, primarily because people in that age group tend to eat less — reducing calcium intake at the same time.

Getting enough calcium is vitally important when we're young and our bones are growing. But it's also important throughout life, as our bodies continually remove and replace small amounts of calcium from our bones as needed. If more calcium is removed from bones than is replaced, bones become weaker and

have a greater chance of breaking. Fractures are the 12th leading cause of disability in the United States.

Foods with high amounts of calcium include dairy products; ready-to-eat cereal and orange juice fortified with calcium; tofu prepared with calcium sulfate; and soymilk with added calcium. For a detailed list, you can download a 26-page PDF file from the National Nutrient Database by clicking on <http://1.usa.gov/calciumlist>.

Nutrition Facts labels normally just list a percentage of calcium on them. The percentage is based on a "Daily Value" of 1,000 milligrams of calcium. So, if the label says a food has 10 percent of calcium, that means it has 100 milligrams. Keep that in mind, especially if you are over 51 — or age 9-18 — and need more than 1,000 milligrams of calcium a day.

If you take calcium supplements, you should know that absorption is best when you take no more than 500 milligrams at a time. The two main forms are calcium carbonate and calcium citrate. Calcium carbonate is inexpensive, but should be taken with food for best absorption. Calcium citrate can be absorbed well even on an empty stomach, and is best for people with low levels of stomach acid — more common over age 50.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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**Editor:**

This column was reviewed by Amber Riggin, a dietetic intern with Ohio State University Extension's community nutrition programs.

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