



Calcium and Vitamin D

Important Pieces to the Healthy Bones Puzzle

Why are calcium and vitamin D important?

Calcium is a mineral that builds and maintains strong bones and teeth. It also helps lower the risk of high blood pressure.

Vitamin D, also known as the sunshine vitamin, helps the body use calcium more effectively to keep bones strong and healthy. It also helps our immune system and reduces inflammation in the body.

How can I get more calcium and vitamin D?

There are lots of tasty, calcium-rich foods, including the following:

- Milk
- Fortified soy beverage
- Yogurt
- Fortified orange juice
- Cheese
- Canned salmon (with bones) and sardines

Other good sources of calcium include beans (soy, white, navy, black, chickpeas), green vegetables (broccoli, kale, boy choy) and almonds.

The following foods are good sources of vitamin D:

- Milk
- Salmon and tuna
- Fortified soy beverage
- Herring or trout
- Egg yolk
- Sardines

Sunshine and Vitamin D

Our bodies can also make vitamin D from the sun. During the summer months, a few minutes a day of unprotected sun exposure is all that most people need to get the vitamin D they need for good health. During the winter months, from October to April, the sun's rays are weaker and are not an adequate source of vitamin D.

Read food labels – it takes time, but it's worth the effort

Reading food labels is a great way to ensure that you're making healthy food choices. If you're looking for foods high in calcium and vitamin D, look for the following on the label:

- Foods with more than 15% of the daily value in calcium
- Foods with more than 20% of the daily value of vitamin D

What can happen if you don't get enough calcium and vitamin D?

Too little calcium or vitamin D can lead to osteoporosis, a bone disease that leads to porous or sponge-like bones that are weak and can easily break. As many as 2 million Canadians have osteoporosis, and it is especially common in older adults.

Some individuals may be more at risk for vitamin D deficiency and may need a Vitamin D supplement, such as:

- Breast- fed babies
- Adults over 50
- Pregnant women
- People who have dark-coloured skin
- People who wear clothing covering much of their skin during the summer
- Everyone during the winter months

Vitamin D recommendations are currently under review. Talk to your doctor about the right Vitamin D supplement for you.

Trade that cola for a glass of milk!

It's a fact – we're drinking more cola and less milk, which is bad news for our bones. Milk is a great source of both calcium and vitamin D, while cola doesn't have significant amounts of either. In addition, cola contains high amounts of phosphoric acid, which blocks calcium absorption.

Milk or Soy Beverage

Nutrition Facts

Per 1 cup (250ml)	Daily Value
Calcium	30%
Vitamin D	45%

Cola

Nutrition Facts

Per 1 cup (250ml)	Daily Value
Calcium	0%
Vitamin D	0%

For more information visit: www.dietitians.ca • www.hc-sc.gc.ca • www.cancer.ca

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