

Eating for Strong Bones

Building strong bones and keeping them strong will help you look, feel and move your best.

Building and keeping strong bones is a lifelong process, which includes eating a diet based on My Pyramid (www.mypyramid.com) and getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily. Physical activity that lets you *bear your weight* — like walking, gardening and dancing — are best.

- You build the foundation for a lifetime of strong bones during your teen and young adult years!
- During your middle years (30s and 40s), it's still important to get enough calcium every day to keep your bones strong.
- After menopause, you lose bone calcium because your body lacks the estrogen hormone. Talk to your health care provider to see if medications are needed to help keep your bones strong.

The best way to get the calcium you need is from the foods you eat. Here's how:

1. Drink 3 or more cups of fat-free or low-fat milk daily to get enough calcium and vitamin D.

If you don't like milk:

- Put chocolate, strawberry or vanilla flavoring in it.
- Drink it really cold! Or have it hot in hot chocolate or decaffeinated latte.
- Eat other foods from the milk group, like cheese or yogurt.
- Eat foods made with milk, like cream soups or pudding.



If milk makes you feel sick:

Some people get stomach aches, gas or diarrhea from milk. These may be caused by an intolerance to the sugar in milk called lactose. If you are one of these people:

- Try drinking small amounts of milk (about ½ cup) with meals and snacks. Eat some foods made from milk — like cheddar and swiss cheese, or yogurt. They have less lactose.
- Try lactose-free milk or add lactose drops or tablets to your milk. You can find these products at a drug store or a large grocery store.

2. Choose other foods with calcium.

Here is a list of other foods that can add to the calcium you need every day to build and keep strong bones.

- Calcium-fortified fruit juices, cereals and breads.
- Foods with cheese in them — like macaroni and cheese, lasagna, tacos and nachos.
- Mustard greens, turnip greens, broccoli and brussel sprouts.
- Foods with beans in them, like chili.
- Calcium-fortified soy milk.
- Tofu (the curd made with soy bean milk) — check the label for calcium content.
- Canned fish such as salmon, sardines and mackerel.

Should you take a supplement?

You may need to take a calcium and vitamin D supplement if you don't get enough of these nutrients from food. Talk to your dietitian or health care provider.

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