

After reading this lesson, click the survey link at the end to answer a few questions and receive nutrition education credit for your class.

Calcium + Vitamin D: The Dynamic Duo



According to the Dietary Guidelines, Americans across all age groups do not eat enough calcium or vitamin D. Keep reading to learn why calcium and vitamin D are important, and how you and your family can increase your calcium and vitamin D intake with WIC.

What is calcium and why is it important?

Calcium is a mineral that makes up most of our bones and teeth. It is also used by our heart, muscles, nerves, and other body systems. Without enough calcium, you could be at higher risk for bone fractures, osteoporosis (bone loss), and other chronic diseases. The main dietary source of calcium in the U.S. is dairy foods. Foods like tofu, soy milk, fortified foods, certain vegetables, and fish are also good sources of calcium.

What is vitamin D and why is it important?

Vitamin D is a nutrient that helps us build bones and keep them strong. In fact, our bodies need vitamin D in order to absorb calcium. Vitamin D also helps our immune system protect us from illness and disease. Vitamin D is only naturally found in a few foods (ex: fatty fish, egg yolks, and some mushrooms), so it is added to certain foods through fortification. Examples of foods fortified with vitamin D include dairy, soy milk, tofu, and some cereal, oatmeal, and juice. Even with fortified foods, it can be difficult to get enough vitamin D in our diets.

- **Is it true that I can get vitamin D from the sun?**

Our bodies can make some vitamin D when our skin is exposed to the sun. However, it is also important to protect our skin from sun damage by wearing sunscreen. People with darker colored skin also need longer sun exposure to make enough vitamin D. So, you may not be able to make enough vitamin D just from safe sun exposure.

- **Should I take a vitamin D supplement?**

Maybe. Check with your (and your child's) healthcare provider(s).

WIC approved foods provide good sources of calcium and/or vitamin D

- Dairy + alternative options
 - All Cow's Milk (including lactose free versions, dry milk, and evaporated milk)
 - Yogurt (including Greek Yogurt)
 - Tofu
 - Soy Milk
- Eggs
- Select fortified cereals and oatmeal (check the Nutrition Facts Label)
- Cash value benefit:
 - Fresh, Frozen or Canned Vegetables like Collard Greens, Spinach, Bok Choy, Turnip Greens, Kale, Mustard Greens, and Mushrooms
- Fish Options (limited to specific WIC food packages):
 - Canned Salmon, Sardines, and Tuna



How can I add calcium and vitamin D-rich foods into my family’s daily routine?

Luckily, many foods (like milk, yogurt, tofu, and soy milk) are good sources of both calcium and vitamin D.

- **Include at least 1 calcium and/or vitamin D rich food at each meal. Examples:**
 - Drink milk or soy milk with meals.
 - Top casseroles, pasta, vegetables, and more with cheese.
 - Have a yogurt and fruit parfait for dessert.
 - Prepare high calcium and/or vitamin D vegetables (see above for examples).
 - Add fish to the menu.
- **Plan snacks to include dairy foods (like yogurt, cottage cheese, or cheese).**
- **Choose foods that are fortified with calcium and/or vitamin D when possible.**
 - In addition to the WIC approved options listed above, some breakfast cereals, oatmeal, 100% juice, and other foods are fortified with calcium and/or vitamin D.
- **Check the Nutrition Facts Label.**
 - A food that provides at least 10% of the Daily Value of a nutrient is considered a “good source.”
 - A food that provides at least 20% of the Daily Value of a nutrient is considered an “excellent source.”

Did You Know?

The only difference between whole milk, reduced fat milk, and skim milk is the fat content. The vitamins and minerals (like calcium and vitamin D) are the same in all these varieties!

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
<i>Trans Fat</i> 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Congratulations, you have finished!

Have more questions? Contact your local WIC nutritionist!

STOP!

Click here to complete the survey
and receive credit



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