

## Women, calcium, and osteoporosis? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

How much calcium do college-age women need in order to avoid osteoporosis and other such problems in later life? What's the best way to get it? (Calcium, I mean, not osteoporosis.)

Curious

### **Answer**

Dear Curious,

Good question! The recommended daily allowance (RDA) of calcium for adults ages 19 to 50 is 1000 mg per day. It's good to note, however, that although osteoporosis is a disease associated with older people, prevention of it starts in childhood. With that being said, check out [Calcium — how much is enough?](#) <sup>[2]</sup> for more information about how much calcium is recommended for children and adults, as well as information about the best sources for calcium.

You're asking the right questions, Curious, since women, in particular, need to be especially vigilant about their calcium intake. They make less bone than men, lose it at a faster rate, and live longer. Thus, women start their adult years with less bone and have a longer time to lose it. Women's bone loss begins at around age 30, and proceeds slowly and continuously until [menopause](#) <sup>[3]</sup> (at approximately age 50). It often speeds up at menopause and continues at a high rate for the next five to ten years.

All body cells need calcium, but over 99 percent of the calcium in the body is used to strengthen bones and teeth. Calcium is also essential for blood clotting, muscle contraction, and nerve functioning. It's believed that a long-standing poor calcium intake contributes to osteoporosis, a condition where there's less bone mass throughout the body. This can lead to a decrease in height, hip fractures in old age, and eventual loss of teeth.

If you want more information about calcium and how much you need to function at your best, you may want to talk to a registered dietitian. You can get a referral from your health care provider.

Here's something else you may not know: [Dancing](#) [4], yes dancing, can also improve bone health.

Alice!

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