

## Boning Up on Calcium

By Melanie Peters | January 09, 2015



Calcium is one of the building blocks for healthy bodies: our bodies need calcium to make strong bones and teeth, to aid with muscle function and, most importantly, for [healthy brain function](#) [↗](#).

We store calcium in our bones and teeth, which means we draw the calcium we need to function from them. Not getting enough calcium can lead to serious health issues, particularly later in life. Ideally, getting enough calcium, in conjunction with vitamin D, which

helps with calcium absorption, throughout childhood and adolescence is key to reaching “peak strength.” After age 30, bones start to [slowly lose calcium](#) [↗](#). A lack of calcium as we age is particularly problematic as it can lead to low bone mass, susceptibility to fractures and [osteoporosis](#) - a condition that affects 40 million people in the U.S. alone.

So how best to get sufficient calcium into your diet? As with most nutrients our bodies need, the best approach is to eat a diverse diet full of vegetables, healthy proteins, grains and, in the case of calcium, foods that have been fortified with the nutrient. Usually when people think of calcium, they think dairy products, like milk and cheese, and by and large this is the [main source of calcium](#) [↗](#) for most Americans. But for those who are allergic to dairy products, are lactose intolerant or are trying to stick to a lower fat diet, [other sources of calcium](#) include kale, broccoli, soy beans, calcium-enriched citrus juices, mineral water, salmon, sardines, almond milk and soy products processed with calcium.



Now that we’ve told you how important calcium is for your health, here are some recipe ideas to help you get it into your daily diet - deliciously!

[Green Morning Smoothie](#) [↗](#) (courtesy of Food Network)

A great start to your day, this smoothie hits all the calcium hot buttons with almond milk (or soy if you

prefer) and fresh spinach. Plus, you'll get a good dose of vitamin C to boot from the peaches and mango.

### **Fiesta Shrimp**

Shrimp is a great source of calcium and this easy to assemble dish can be made quickly in your microwave – a perfect option for a light, healthy lunch.

### **Chicken Parmigiana**

This Italian classic is made a little lighter by calling for skim milk mozzarella, a great source of calcium, and by using only the egg whites for the chicken. With these two switches you can have your calcium-cake and eat it too!

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