

Calcium & School Meals



The 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend increasing the intake of fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk and milk products.

Key Issues:

- The vast majority of children do not get the recommended amount of calcium.
- Calcium is critical for bone health, especially for growing children and teens.
- Fat-free (skim) and low-fat (1%) milk provide calcium and other nutrients without a lot of saturated fat.
- Kids who eat school lunch drink more milk than those who don't.

Nutrient Targets for Lunch Grade Groupings (1/3 RDA's)

K-3 = 267 mg
K-6 = 286 mg
4-12 = 370 mg
7-12 = 400 mg

The main sources of calcium in the typical American diet are found in dairy products. Milk, yogurt, and cheese are some of the best sources of this nutrient. Calcium may also be found in some plant sources, including dark leafy greens, broccoli, and dried beans.

Sources of Calcium		
Food Source	Serving Size	Calcium amount in mg
Yogurt, plain, low-fat	1 cup	448
Yogurt, fruit, low-fat	1 cup	372
Milk, low-fat (1%) / fat-free (skim)	1 cup	305
Cheese, mozzarella, part skim milk	1 oz	207
Cheese prod., American, pasteurized process	2 slices = 1 oz	150
Spinach, frozen, chopped, cooked	1/2 cup	145
Cottage cheese, low-fat, 1%	1/2 cup	69
Beans, baked, canned, pork and tomato sauce	1/2 cup	69
Broccoli, frozen, chopped, cooked	1/2 cup	30

Source: USDA Database Release CN 15 through NutriKids Version 12.5

Increasing Calcium Intake

Low calcium intake is usually caused by students declining milk. The following are ways to increase milk consumption:

- Keep milk cold!
- Increase the variety of milks offered.*
- Consider offering milk in snazzy packaging. Kids drink more milk when it's offered in "cool" packages, like milk "chugs."
- Provide nutrition education units focused on calcium.

In addition, offer low-fat or fat-free cheese and yogurt. Use low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese, and yogurt in recipes.

* Please note that 2% and whole milk are not to be served to meet the fluid milk requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Refer to USDA Policy SP 29-2011- Nutrition Requirements for Fluid Milk at www.doe.in.gov/food/schoolnutrition/pdf/SP_29-2011.pdf.

This fact sheet was adapted from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction fact sheet: "Calcium and School Meals," and the USDA Fact Sheet "Use Low-fat Milk, Cheese, and Yogurt for healthier school meals." MyPlate is the new food icon from USDA.

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