



Healthy bones for life

- Bones play a critical role in giving our body form and shape, but adults above 50 years old are at higher risk of losing bone mass faster than it can be replaced.
- Many older adults suffer from fractures because their bones have lost strength. This disease of brittle bones is called 'osteoporosis', which affects their mobility and quality of life.
- While osteoporosis affects both men and women, osteoporosis is more common among post-menopausal women.
- A healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise, and a well-balanced diet with sufficient calcium and vitamin D, goes a long way to help maintain bone strength of adults.

Ensuring adequate calcium intake for healthy bones

Getting enough calcium is important regardless of how young or how old you are. Calcium helps build bones up from childhood right up to the age of 20 years, after which you may start to lose more bone mass than your body forms, and the loss speeds up as you age. Hence, ensuring an adequate calcium intake daily would slow down the loss of calcium from bones.

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for calcium varies among different ages of adults.

Age Group	RDA for Calcium
19-50 years	800mg
≥ 51 years	1000mg

Figure 1 on the right shows an example of how to meet an RDA of 1000mg of calcium (10 calcium stars) if you are ≥ 51 years old. If you are 19-50 years old, aim for 8 calcium stars a day.



Figure 1: Various sources of calcium

Source: ▶ Health Promotion Board, Nutrition Guide, The Recipe for Healthy Ageing

Vitamin D and Supplements



Vitamin D helps your body absorb the calcium from your diet. Your body can make vitamin D when it is exposed to ultra violet (UVB) rays of the sun. Try to let the sun shine on your arms and legs twice a week. The best time to do so is anytime between 10am and 3 pm, for about 5 to 30 minutes.



Dietary sources of vitamin D include eggs, liver and oily fish like salmon, cod and mackerel. Alternative vitamin D fortified foods include selected brands of milk, soymilk, ready-to-eat-cereal and margarine.

It is best to get all your calcium and vitamin D from food and sun exposure alone, but if you are unable to get enough of either nutrient, consider discussing with your doctor about supplementing with calcium or vitamin D supplements.

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