

VITAMIN D, CALCIUM, AND LOW BACK PAIN

Calcium and vitamin D protect bones from becoming weak, therefore minimizing the risk of back and joint pain.

Calcium

Calcium is essential for building bone and keeping bones strong. As the body does not produce calcium on its own, getting enough of this mineral from food is essential. In fact, when a person's body does not get enough calcium it begins to use the calcium from the bones, resulting in bone fragility, loss of bone density and fractures.¹ Not only does this increase an individual's risk of back pain but it may also lead to a condition known as osteoporosis, a bone disease characterized by bone weakness and breakage.²

Add calcium to your diet

The amount of calcium an individual needs depends on their age and sex. Women over 50 years old and men over 70 generally need more calcium (1,200 mg daily), while women under 50 and men under 70 need less (1,000 mg daily).¹

Breakfast and snacks:

- Cereal with low-fat milk
- Fruit with low-fat yoghurt, nuts, or cottage cheese
- Fortified orange juice
- Yoghurt-based smoothies

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- Salads or pastas with low-fat cheese (mozzarella or goats cheese are good options).
- Consider other good sources of calcium, such as oranges, almonds, broccoli, spinach, and tofu.

Calcium-fortified drinks

Always shake containers or bottles of calcium-fortified milk or other beverages before drinking — the calcium may have settled at the bottom.¹

Be careful

Caffeine and phosphorus in carbonated beverages can affect bone health, making it harder for the body to absorb calcium. Limit your intake of tea, coffee and soft drinks.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is necessary in order for the body to absorb the calcium it requires for building and maintaining strong and healthy bones.

Sources of vitamin D

Individuals under 50 years of age need 400 to 800 international units (IU) per day. People over 50 need 800 to 1,000 IU. However, it is a good idea to check with your doctor about how much is right for you: some people need more than others, and the maximum safe limit is 4,000 per day.¹

The easiest way to increase vitamin D is by going outside for a walk. In the winter, try to go out in the early morning or late afternoon with your face exposed for about 20 minutes. You may need less exposure during the summer. Doing this just a few times a week is enough to make and store all of the vitamin D you need. If you have darker skin, you may need more time in the sun to get enough vitamin D. However, if you are at risk of skin cancer or concerned about sun exposure, speak to your doctor about safe levels for you or supplements. You can also get vitamin D from foods such as oily fish (e.g. salmon or trout), egg yolks, liver, and fortified milk.

Questions about your diagnosis?

Unsure which treatment is right for you?

Did you know you have access to a free, independent and confidential decision support service?

Discuss your concerns and have your case reviewed by a specialist in your condition.

The decision is yours. And we're with you all the way.



1. Calcium/Vitamin D. National Osteoporosis Foundation website. <https://www.nof.org/patients/treatment/calciumvitamin-d/> Accessed August 28, 2017.

2. What is Osteoporosis and What Causes It? National Osteoporosis Foundation website. <https://www.nof.org/patients/what-is-osteoporosis/> Accessed August 31, 2017.

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