



# FNP

## Louisiana's Future: Families and Children

# Get Calcium!

## Fact Sheet

Calcium is the most important mineral in your body. During growing years, calcium is important for bone growth. As we get older, it helps to keep our bones strong.

We need calcium as we age because a small amount of old bone is absorbed and new bone made in our body each day. In fact, 20% of bone calcium is removed and replaced each year.

### What if you don't get enough calcium?

These health problems have been linked to a diet low in calcium:

Osteoporosis ... a crippling bone disease. Bones become so brittle that they break easily.

Bone loss in the jaw ... this can lead to problems chewing, tooth loss and poorly fitting dentures.

Hypertension ... high blood pressure can lead to strokes and heart attacks in some people.

### How much calcium do you need?

New calcium recommendations were released in August 1997 by the National Institutes of Health. These new recommendations, based on research, are for higher intakes of calcium.

<i>If your age is:</i>	<i>You need this much calcium:</i>
1-3	500 milligrams
4-8	800 milligrams
9-18	1,300 milligrams
19-50	1,000 milligrams
51+*	1,200 milligrams

*\* Women 51+ not on hormone replacement therapy should have 1,500 mg of calcium daily.*

*1 (8-ounce) cup milk, 1 cup of yogurt or 1 1/2 ounces of cheese each has about 300 milligrams of calcium.*

### How can you get calcium?

Milk and milk products are our best sources of calcium. One 8-ounce glass of milk or 8 ounces of yogurt each provides 300 milligrams of calcium. Choose fat-free milk and yogurt and get just as much calcium without the fat and calories.

Good non-dairy sources include sardines and other fish canned with the bones, tofu, dark green leafy vegetables and shellfish.

Many foods are being fortified with calcium. Calcium is added to some orange juice, cereal, waffles, breakfast bars and cranberry juice. These are labeled "calcium-fortified." **Read the label.** The amount of calcium in these foods is listed on the label.

Remember that milk and milk products have all the nutrients that help your body use calcium. If you use calcium-fortified foods, try using them with a little milk or other milk products.

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## What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance is when you cannot digest the lactose in milk. Lactose, the sugar in milk, is broken down by the enzyme lactase. Some people have low levels of lactase, meaning that all of the lactose is not broken down. When milk sugar isn't completely digested, some people experience bloating, gas or diarrhea.

## Who is most likely to be lactose intolerant?

It is a relatively common problem of adults of African, Asian, American Indian or Mediterranean descent. Also as some people get older, the amount of lactase in their digestive tracts decreases, and they develop lactose intolerance.

## Tips if you are lactose intolerant....

- Try drinking small amounts of milk with meals and snacks.
- Look for lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk in the dairy case.
- Use cultured dairy products such as yogurt, which contains "friendly" bacteria that help your body digest lactase.
- Try cheese. More than half of the lactase is removed when cheese is made.
- Buy lactase enzyme tablets or drops from the drugstore or supermarket. There are several brand names such as Lactaid or Dairy Eaze. This enzyme digests the lactose and prevents cramping.
- Choose foods that are fortified with calcium.

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