

**Family Living  
Focus**

by

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**What's In Your Glass?**

**Calcium Needs Reviewed**

The average 12 to 19-year-old male who drinks soda pop, drinks more than two cans a day (females are consuming one a day) which can add up to about 900 cans of soda pop (12 ounces) in a year.

Americans are consuming twice as much soda pop as they did 25 years ago. In addition, the market for non-carbonated, sweetened drinks like sports drinks, fruit-ades, and flavored iced teas is also on the rise. What is in your child's glass?

The concern is that these sweet beverages provide calories and sugar to the body, but do not offer other essential vitamins and minerals. There has been an association made with soda pop consumption and overweight and obesity because it can provide extra, non-nutritious calories and is often offered in very large sizes. Consuming extra calories, in addition to decreasing physical activity, may lead to gradual weight gain over years.

More importantly, by choosing these beverages, young people are not selecting milk, which does

provide an important nutrient to the body—calcium.

Calcium is a key mineral that your body uses in many different ways; however, it is most noted for its role in bone and teeth strength. Eating and drinking enough calcium is important at any stage of life, but it is most critical during the pre-teen and young adult years. During the adolescent years (around 9-15), bones develop quickly. In fact, nearly half of all bone is formed during these years. Lifestyle choices at this time, such as getting enough calcium into your body, will effect the quality of bones in the future. Unfortunately, only 13 percent of girls and boys aged 12-19 are meeting their recommended need for calcium.

The recommended daily intake of calcium for youth aged 9-18 is 1300mg of calcium each day. As a reference, a glass of milk can provide about 300mg of calcium to the body. Young people should aim to eat or drink a food or beverage that is high in calcium at least four times a day! This can be easy if young adults chose a

food or beverage high in calcium each time they have a meal or snack. It can taste good, too.

Not all calcium comes in a glass. Though milk (any flavor) is a concentrated source of calcium, most dairy products will also meet the body's craving for calcium. Foods such as low-fat yogurt, cheeses, custards, ice cream, puddings, powdered milk, and foods made with these items will be good sources of calcium. Some of your favorite foods may already fit—milkshakes, macaroni and cheese, cereal with milk, tacos, pizza, and sandwiches, to name a few. What other foods can you think of?

Kids and teens who do not like milk or dairy products can find calcium in foods/drinks such as calcium-fortified orange juice and other foods with calcium added such as cereals, cereal bars, and snacks. Other natural sources of calcium are soybeans, tofu (if preserved in calcium salts), some beans, salmon (canned with bones), greens, spinach, and broccoli, and almonds.

Look at the Nutrition Facts

panel on the food label and search for the amount of calcium in that product. It is listed as a percent, pick a food or drink with at least 10 percent of the recommended amount of calcium per serving.

In addition to maintaining adequate intakes of calcium, it is important to keep bones healthy by being physically active, avoiding low body weights or extreme diets, getting outside in the sunshine, and choosing not to smoke cigarette or drink large amounts of alcohol. These are other lifestyle choices a parent or guardian may want to discuss with the young adults in their family. Finally, being a positive role model for young adults can help them to make healthy habits a part of their lives.

To celebrate National Osteoporosis Prevention Month in May, learn more about calcium. Contact your county's Penn State Cooperative Extension office. Ask for publications entitled: "Bone Builders: Are You Getting Enough Calcium?" And "Bone Builders: Support Your Bones with Healthy Habits." On the Internet, check out [whymilk.com](http://whymilk.com).



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