

NUTRITION

Calcium for Babies: Best Foods for Strong Bones and Teeth

Calcium builds your baby's bones and teeth during the fastest growth period of their life. See the best calcium-rich foods for babies by age, with easy serving ideas.

Key Takeaways

- From 6 to 12 months, the adequate intake is roughly 260 mg of calcium per day, mostly supplied by breast milk or formula.
- Vitamin D supports calcium absorption, which is why breastfed infants often need vitamin D supplementation.
- Bioavailability varies by food: calcium in broccoli is well absorbed, while spinach contains binders that lower availability.
- Cow's milk should not be the main drink before 12 months, though yogurt and cheese are fine from around 6 months.
- Discuss any calcium or vitamin D supplement with your pediatrician before starting.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much calcium does my baby need each day?

From 6 to 12 months, the recommended adequate intake is about 260 mg of calcium per day. Breast milk or formula supplies most of this, with solid foods adding the rest as your baby eats more.

Can my baby drink cow's milk for calcium?

Cow's milk should not be the main drink before 12 months, but small amounts cooked into food or full-fat yogurt and cheese are fine from around 6 months. Breast milk or formula remains the primary drink in the first year.

Do dairy-free babies get enough calcium?

Yes, with planning. Calcium-set tofu, fortified plant milks used in cooking, well-cooked broccoli, and certain leafy greens can supply calcium. Talk to your pediatrician if your baby avoids dairy.

Does calcium need vitamin D to work?

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, which is why the two are often discussed together. Many breastfed babies are advised to take a vitamin D supplement; ask your pediatrician.

Can babies get too much calcium?

Excessive calcium, usually from supplements rather than food, can interfere with iron and zinc absorption. Food-based calcium from a varied diet is the safest approach.

When can I offer yogurt and cheese?

Plain full-fat yogurt and pasteurized cheese can be introduced from around 6 months as part of a varied diet, even though cow's milk as a drink waits until 12 months.

Sources

1. Vitamin D — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. Infant and young child feeding — World Health Organization