

Size Up the Supplement

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist
Angie Jacobs, Dietetic Intern (former)

Counting tips:

- Supplements have different serving sizes and intake recommendations.
- To determine how many milligrams (mg) of a nutrient are in each capsule, divide the milligrams of that nutrient by the number of capsules in each serving size.
- Remember, you probably are getting some vitamins and minerals from your diet. Be sure to include both supplements and dietary intake when considering if you are getting the right amount of a nutrient.

Note: Adequate intake is the amount that is recommended for the average person to maintain good health.

How many milligrams of calcium are in each capsule of this supplement?

_____ mg/capsule

How many capsules would you have to take each day to meet the calcium requirement for your age group?

_____ capsules/day

Supplement Facts

Serving Size 2 Capsules
Servings Per Container 125

	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value
Total Carbohydrate	1g	<1% ⁺
Calcium (as calcium citrate/ calcium carbonate/calcium malate)	500 mg	50%

⁺Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Other ingredients: Gelatin (capsule), cellulose, magnesium stearate, silica.

Recommendation: Take 2 capsules twice daily, preferably with food.

Adequate Intakes (AIs) for Calcium

Age	Male	Female	Pregnant	Lactating
Birth to 6 months	210 mg	210 mg		
7-12 months	270 mg	270 mg		
1-3 years	500 mg	500 mg		
4-8 years	800 mg	800 mg		
9-13 years	1,300 mg	1,300 mg		
14-18 years	1,300 mg	1,300 mg	1,300 mg	1,300 mg
19-50 years	1,000 mg	1,000 mg	1,000 mg	1,000 mg
50+ years	1,200 mg	1,200 mg		

What type of calcium is best?

Many different forms of calcium are available in pill form. Calcium carbonate, calcium citrate, calcium malate, lactate, gluconate, microcrystalline hydroxyapatite and coral calcium are just some examples. Calcium carbonate has been studied the most substantially and usually rates high in absorption. However, some tablets of calcium carbonate are not formulated correctly and do not dissolve adequately. Calcium carbonate also can cause gastric discomforts such as bloating and abdominal pain for some individuals. Calcium citrate usually is absorbed as well as calcium carbonate but without the issues of gastric discomfort. Other forms of calcium have not been studied as extensively.

No matter what type of calcium you decide to take, be sure to check the milligram amount of calcium in each pill and consider your dietary intake to determine how many pills to take each day. Most experts suggest taking calcium with meals and only take 500 mg at one time. If you take a calcium supplement, be sure your supplement also provides vitamin D or you get your vitamin D from a separate supplement.

Size Up the Nutrition Facts Label: How Much Calcium Is In a Serving of Food?

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (27g)
Servings Per Container about 12

Amount Per Serving	Cereal	with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup skim milk
Calories	100	140
Calories from Fat	5	10
% Daily Value**		
Total Fat 0.5g*	1%	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	0%
Trans Fat 0g		
Polyunsaturated Fat 0g		
Monounsaturated Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	1%
Sodium 190mg	8%	10%
Potassium 95mg	3%	9%
Total Carbohydrate 22g	7%	9%
Dietary Fiber 3g	11%	11%
Sugars 4g		
Other Carbohydrates 15g		
Protein 3g		
Vitamin A	10%	15%
Vitamin C	10%	10%
Calcium	2%	15%
Iron	45%	45%
Vitamin D	10%	25%
Thiamin	50%	50%
Riboflavin	50%	60%
Niacin	50%	50%
Vitamin B ₆	50%	50%
Folic Acid	50%	50%
Vitamin B ₁₂	50%	60%
Phosphorus	10%	20%
Magnesium	6%	10%
Zinc	50%	50%
Copper	4%	4%

* Amount in cereal. A serving of cereal plus skim milk provides 1g total fat, less than 5mg cholesterol, 250mg sodium, 300mg potassium, 28g total carbohydrate (9g sugars) and 7g protein.

**Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Potassium	Less than	3,500mg	3,500mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calculating tips:

- Percent Daily Value (%DV) stands for the percentage of the recommended amount of the nutrient in a serving of a particular food. Daily values are recommendations for adults based on a 2,000-calorie diet. On a Nutrition Facts label, %DV serves as an average recommendation to give consumers a good idea of the nutrient value of a food.
- On any food label, adding "0" to the end of the number in the "%DV" column for calcium equals the number of milligrams of calcium in one serving of the food item. This shortcut only applies to calcium, not other nutrients.

Example

The nutrition label shows that one serving of cereal has 25% DV of calcium. Adding a zero to 25 equals 250. This means a serving of cereal has 250 milligrams of calcium.

Note: Different age groups have slightly different recommendations for nutrient intake. Follow your doctor or dietitian's recommendation based on your individual needs.

How much is one serving of this cereal?

_____ cup/serving

What percentage of the DV for magnesium is in each serving (without milk)?

_____ %

How many milligrams of calcium does one serving provide (without milk)?

_____ mg/serving

What percentage of the DV for vitamin D is in each serving (without milk)?

_____ %

Answers: $\frac{3}{4}$ cup/serving, 20 mg calcium/serving, 6% DV for magnesium/serving, 10% DV for vitamin D/serving