

# Calcium & Vitamin D Guide

For patients with osteopenia, osteoporosis, or low bone density

## Why Calcium and Vitamin D Matter

Calcium is the main mineral in bone. Vitamin D is essential for your body to absorb calcium from food and supplements. Without adequate vitamin D, even a high calcium intake won't protect your bones. Together, they are the foundation of bone health.

## Daily Calcium Goals

Who	Total Daily Calcium Goal
Adult women 19–50	1,000 mg/day
Women 51+ / Postmenopausal	1,200 mg/day
Men 19–70	1,000 mg/day
Men 71+	1,200 mg/day
Patients on steroids / high fracture risk	Per doctor recommendation

## Food Sources of Calcium (per serving)

Food	Calcium
Yogurt (plain, 8 oz)	~400 mg
Milk (8 oz)	~300 mg
Cheddar cheese (1.5 oz)	~300 mg
Fortified plant milk (8 oz)	~300 mg
Sardines with bones (3 oz)	~325 mg
Tofu, firm (4 oz)	~200 mg
Kale, cooked (1 cup)	~180 mg
Broccoli, cooked (1 cup)	~60 mg

## Calcium Supplements: Tips

- **Calcium carbonate** (Tums, Caltrate) — take WITH meals for best absorption.

- **Calcium citrate** (Citracal) — can be taken with or without food. Better for patients with low stomach acid or on acid-blocking medications.
- **Take in divided doses** — your body can only absorb ~500 mg at a time. Split doses throughout the day.
- **Avoid megadoses** — do not exceed 2,000 mg total daily calcium (food + supplements combined) unless directed by your doctor.
- **Space away from thyroid medication** — take calcium at least 4 hours after levothyroxine.

## Vitamin D

Most adults with osteoporosis need at least 1,000–2,000 IU of vitamin D3 daily. Your doctor may recommend more depending on your blood level. Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) is preferred over D2. Take it with a meal containing fat for best absorption.

**Your Prescription:** Your prescribed calcium: \_\_\_\_\_ mg daily | Your prescribed Vitamin D: \_\_\_\_\_ IU daily