

Calcium

Why is calcium intake important?

Calcium is a nutrient that helps to build strong and healthy bones and teeth. It is also involved in our nervous system, blood clotting and muscle function.

How much calcium do you need?

In the UK, the following daily calcium intakes are recommended¹:

Stage of life*	Recommended daily intake (mg)	
0–12 months	525	
1–3 years	350	
4–6 years	450	
7–10 years	550	
11–18 years	Males 1000	Females 800
Adults	700	
Breastfeeding	1250	

*Please note that this information sheet is aimed at adults. Requirements for pregnancy, breastfeeding and childhood are outlined in our information about different [life stages](#) available at www.vegansociety.com/nutrition.

How can you make sure that you get enough calcium?

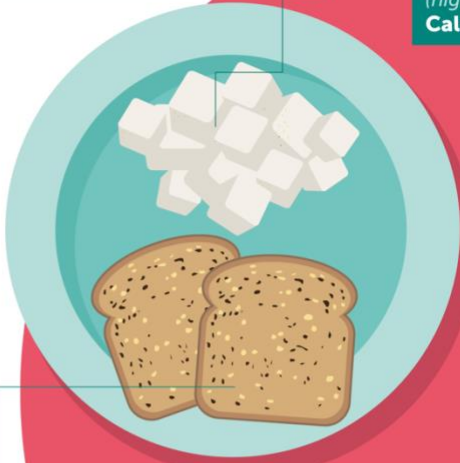
You can get enough calcium from a well-planned vegan diet. Calcium-rich foods include calcium-fortified plant milks and yoghurts, calcium-set tofu, soya and linseed bread fortified with extra calcium, and fortified ready oat cereal. Other useful vegan sources of calcium include watercress, kale and okra. Using the meal planning tips on page two will help you to obtain plenty of well-absorbed calcium and hit your target on a daily basis (see infographic)^{2–5}

CALCIUM

CALCIUM-SET FIRM TOFU 100g
($\frac{1}{4}$ dinner plate)
Calcium content 400mg

FORTIFIED MILK ALTERNATIVE 200ml
(highball glass)
Calcium content 240mg

FORTIFIED YOGHURT ALTERNATIVE 150g ($\frac{1}{3}$ big pot)
Calcium content 180mg



SOYA AND LINSEED BREAD WITH EXTRA CALCIUM
(2 slices) Calcium content 222mg

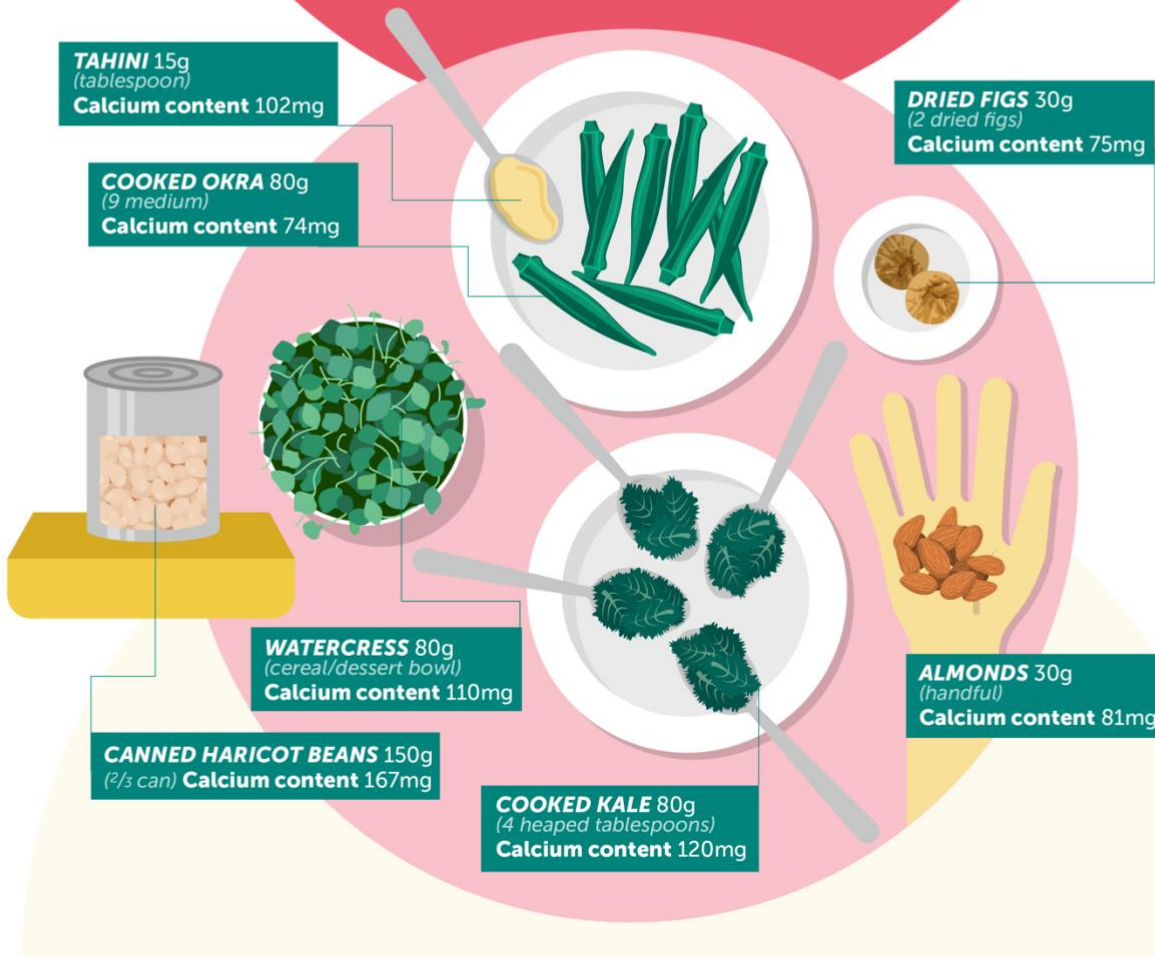
FORTIFIED READY OAT CEREAL 30g
($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) Calcium content 402mg

TIP: Choose at least **two portions daily of the foods above** to help ensure that you get enough calcium. For example, you might achieve this goal by using at least two portions of fortified plant milk over the course of the day.
The foods below provide smaller but useful amounts of calcium.

TAHINI 15g
(tablespoon)
Calcium content 102mg

COOKED OKRA 80g
(9 medium)
Calcium content 74mg

DRIED FIGS 30g
(2 dried figs)
Calcium content 75mg



WATERCRESS 80g
(cereal/dessert bowl)
Calcium content 110mg

CANNED HARICOT BEANS 150g
($\frac{2}{3}$ can) Calcium content 167mg

COOKED KALE 80g
(4 heaped tablespoons)
Calcium content 120mg

ALMONDS 30g
(handful)
Calcium content 81mg

If you are not eating calcium-rich foods daily as part of a balanced diet, then a calcium supplement may be needed to top up your dietary intake. Speak to a health professional if you have concerns about your calcium intake. A calcium deficiency can impact your general health and, in more severe cases, there can be a risk of rickets in children or [osteoporosis](#) in later life.

Shopping tips

- The amount of calcium added to fortified products varies, so check the nutrition information on labels.
- You can use the ingredients list on a label to work out if calcium has been used to set tofu, e.g. 'Firming Agent: Calcium Sulphate'.

Calcium absorption

Calcium absorption is reduced by components of our diets called oxalates and phytates. The table below provides some information about the variable absorbability of calcium in plant-based foods⁶:

Absorbability	Plant-based food
Good	Fortified foods, calcium-set tofu, kale, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, pak choi, cauliflower, watercress
Fair	Almonds, sesame seeds, pinto beans
Poor	Spinach, rhubarb

Fortified foods and calcium-set tofu provide us with good amounts of well-absorbed calcium. However, we also need to make sure that we get enough vitamin D because this nutrient is involved in calcium absorption. Further information is available in our [vitamin D guidelines](#).

Calcium tips to take away

- Ensure that your daily diet includes foods containing good amounts of well-absorbed calcium, such as fortified milk and yoghurt alternatives, calcium-set tofu and soya and linseed bread fortified with extra calcium.
- Other useful plant-based sources of calcium include kale, watercress, tahini, haricot beans, almonds, dried figs and okra.
- Follow our [vitamin D guidelines](#) to help optimise calcium absorption.

Further information

These are general guidelines about nutrition. If you have concerns about your diet, please talk to your doctor about seeing a dietitian. Discussing the use of supplements with a health professional will help to ensure that they are suitable for you.

You might be interested to check out the following webpages at www.vegansociety.com:

- [Vitamin D](#) – check that you are helping your body to absorb calcium.
- [Bone health](#)
- [Life stages](#), including pregnancy, breastfeeding and different age groups
- [Nutrition overview](#)

References

1. Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and Nutrition. *Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom* London: HMSO; 1991
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6. Buchowski, MS. CHAPTER 1: Calcium in the Context of Dietary Sources and Metabolism. In *Calcium: Chemistry, Analysis, Function and Effects*; 2015 <https://pubs.rsc.org/lv/content/chapterhtml/2015/bk9781849738873-00003?isbn=978-1-84973-887-3> (accessed 05 October 2023)