

Strong Bones for You and Your Baby

There are actions you can take to keep your bones strong during and after pregnancy and to make sure that your growing baby builds strong bones, too. Eating a bone-healthy diet throughout pregnancy, and while you're breastfeeding, is very important. There are programs that can help you get the foods you and your baby need to eat a bone-healthy diet. These foods provide calcium, vitamin D, calories, protein, and they include colorful fruits and vegetables.

Calcium

Getting enough calcium is necessary during pregnancy and after your baby is born so your baby's bones will grow in density (thickness). It will help keep your bones strong, too!

Foods that are rich in calcium include:

- Dairy products: milk and cheese
- Nondairy beverages with calcium added: calcium-fortified juices or calcium-fortified soy beverages
- Green leafy vegetables: bok choy, broccoli and broccoli rabe, dandelion greens, collard greens, kale, mustard greens, and turnip greens
- Cereal with calcium added
- Tofu with calcium added

To make sure that you get enough calcium:

- Be sure to include foods that can help you get 3 to 4 servings of calcium-rich foods each day.
- Have a calcium-rich food at each meal and snack because your body uses calcium best when it is eaten at different times during the day.
- Speak to your health care provider if you think you do not get enough calcium in your diet. Your health care provider will help you decide if a calcium supplement is needed, how much is needed, and which supplement is right for you.

Vitamin D

During pregnancy and after your baby's birth, you need enough vitamin D to keep your bones strong, and to make sure your baby's bones grow strong.

- You need 600 IU (International Units) of Vitamin D each day during pregnancy and while you're breastfeeding, such as an 8-ounce cup of milk, juice, or soy beverage with vitamin D added. To get the recommended amount of vitamin D, you should drink 6 cups of these beverages each day.
- Many women cannot get the recommended amount of vitamin D from diet alone. During pregnancy and while breastfeeding, it is important to take a prenatal vitamin to get the recommended amount of vitamin D as well as other important nutrients. During the first year of life, your baby needs 400 IU of vitamin D each day to build strong bones.
- If you choose to bottle feed your baby, it is important to know that most infant formulas have 400 IU of vitamin D in each quart (32 ounces). If your baby is drinking less than one quart of formula daily, additional vitamin D is necessary. Speak to your baby's health care provider to discuss how much formula your baby drinks and to find out if vitamin D drops are needed. You may need a prescription.
- Breast milk is rich in nutrients and the preferred choice for infant feeding. Breastfed and partially breastfed babies may need to be given a supplement of drops containing 400 IU of vitamin D. Drops need to be given for as long as you continue to breast-feed or until your baby is weaned and drinks 1 quart (32 ounces) of formula each day. It is important to speak to your baby's health care provider to get a prescription for vitamin D drops. When your baby is one year old, the recommendation for vitamin D increases to 600 IU each day. It is often hard for young children to get this much vitamin D in the food they eat. It is important to talk to your baby's health care provider to find out if a multivitamin is recommended.