

Dairy Foods and Alternatives

How much you need

Recommended serves of dairy foods a day

Children under five - one and a half serves.

A serve is:

- 1 cup milk or a soy drink with 100 mg calcium/100 ml
- 2 slices (40 grams) hard cheese like cheddar
- ½ cup ricotta
- 200 grams yoghurt.

Soy, rice and nut drinks can replace dairy foods like milk, cheese and yoghurt. Choose store-bought products such as soy or rice drinks with added calcium. Read the food label to check if it contains 100 mg per 100 ml.

Other foods do contain calcium and can replace dairy foods. These include:

- canned fish with bones such as sardines, herrings or salmon
- almonds
- tofu.

Seafood and some plant and grain foods contain smaller amounts of calcium.

Dairy alternatives

Each of these foods contain a serve of calcium about the same as a dairy food serve.

- 100 grams (about ½ cup) of almonds with skin on (do not give whole nuts to under threes as nuts are a choking risk). If sending nut containing food to school or care check your services allergy aware policy.
- 45 grams sardines.
- 75–80 grams (about 1/3 cup) canned salmon with bones.

The calcium from dairy foods is absorbed better than leafy green vegetables, grains and legumes. These foods contain things (oxalic acid and phytic acid) that can stop calcium being absorbed as well.

You need to eat more of these foods to get all the calcium you need.

Dairy free food ideas

- soy milk and banana smoothie
- sardine and tomato vegetable sauce on wholegrain pasta
- nut paste on bread
- salmon and soy yoghurt dip and vegetable sticks
- spinach and egg omelette.

Want to know more

Ask your GP or child health nurse for advice for yourself or your child.