What You Need to Know About Women's Health: Tips for staying healthy
Calcium...

**What is Calcium?**

Calcium is a mineral needed for strong, healthy bones and teeth. It is also needed for healthy blood pressure, muscle contraction, and nerve function. Bone density reaches its highest point between 20 and 35 years old, so it is extremely important to get enough calcium in your diet while you are young. People who don’t get enough calcium are at risk for osteoporosis.

**How Much Calcium Do I Need?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Calcium (mg per day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50 years</td>
<td>1200</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**What Foods Are Good Sources?**

- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Fortified Soy Milk
- Fortified Orange Juice
- Canned salmon & sardines
- Tofu
- Almonds

**What If I’m Lactose Intolerant?**

There are plenty of ways to get enough calcium in your diet, even if you are lactose intolerant.

- Incorporate non-dairy calcium sources into your diet, such as fortified soy milk, fortified orange juice, tofu processed with calcium, canned salmon, and almonds.
- Drink lactose-free milk or take lactase enzyme supplements.
- Try cheeses like cheddar and Swiss, which are low in lactose.
- Slowly add small amounts of dairy products to your diet. You may be able to tolerate certain amounts of some foods.

Consuming three servings daily of high calcium foods such as low fat milk or yogurt is an easy way to help meet your calcium needs. If you can’t get enough calcium from food, you may need a calcium supplement. Talk to your health care provider or registered dietitian for more information.
& Vitamin D

Why Do I Need Vitamin D?

**Vitamin D** is a fat-soluble vitamin that helps your body absorb calcium, which is needed to **build strong bones**. Vitamin D is just as important for bone health as calcium, and many people do **not** get enough of it. **New research** suggests that people who get enough vitamin D have a **lower risk** of many **chronic diseases**, such as cancer, autoimmune diseases, cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, and depression.

How Do I Get Enough?

- Your **body** can actually **produce vitamin D** through **sun exposure** to your skin. Getting **10-15 minutes** of unprotected sun exposure daily is a great way to help your body get the vitamin D it needs. However, it’s hard to get enough vitamin D from the sun during the **winter months**, even if you spend a lot of time outside.
- There are **very few** natural food sources of vitamin D. Most people need to eat foods **fortified with vitamin D** in order to get enough.
- If you can’t get enough vitamin D from sun exposure or foods, you might need to consider taking **vitamin D supplements**. Talk to your healthcare provider or registered dietitian for more information.

What Foods Are Good Sources?

- Fatty Fish
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Fortified Milk
- Fortified Cereals
- Fortified Juice

How Much Vitamin D Do I Need?

The current **adequate intake** level for vitamin D for adults under 50 is **200 international units (IU)**. However, **recent research** suggests that these recommendations are **too low**. Many people require as much as **800 IU** of vitamin D each day to **avoid deficiency**.
Folic Acid

What is Folic Acid?
Folate is a B vitamin found naturally in many foods that helps your body make new cells. Folic acid is the man-made version of folate. It is added to many grain foods and is available in supplements.

Why is Folic Acid Important for Women?
- Consuming enough folic acid keeps your blood healthy and prevents a type of anemia, a condition in which you don’t have enough healthy red blood cells. Without enough red blood cells, your body doesn’t get enough oxygen. This can cause fatigue, headaches, sore mouth, and pale skin.
- Folic acid is also important in preventing birth defects involving a baby’s nervous system. One of these birth defects is Spina bifida, which causes paralysis and other disabilities. To prevent these birth defects, it is important for women to get enough folic acid long before they even consider starting to have children.

What Foods Are Good Sources?
- Beans, peas, & lentils
- Juices and fruits
- Soymilk
- Vegetables
- Nuts and seeds
- Fortified breakfast cereals
- Fortified bread, flour, pasta, and rice

How Much Do I Need?
Most women need 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid each day.

Should I Take a Folic Acid Supplement?
For some women, the easiest way to be sure to get enough folic acid is to take a multivitamin supplement containing folic acid. Look for brands that contain 400 mcg folic acid, or 100% Daily Value.
Fiber

What is Fiber?
Fiber is the part of plant foods that your body cannot digest. It is found in fruits, vegetables, beans & legumes, nuts, and grains. High fiber foods help fill you up, and they tend to be low in calories and full of important nutrients. There are two types of fiber that are both essential for a healthy diet: soluble fiber and insoluble fiber.

Soluble Fiber
Foods high in soluble fiber help decrease blood cholesterol levels by binding some of the cholesterol in your digestive tract. A diet high in soluble fiber may lower heart disease risk. These foods may also help control blood sugar levels, which can be helpful in people with diabetes.

High soluble fiber foods include:
- Beans, peas, & lentils
- Oats
- Barley
- Apples
- Carrots
- Plums
- Squash

Insoluble Fiber
Foods high in insoluble fiber keep your digestive system healthy and running smoothly. These foods help prevent constipation, and they may also prevent some cancers.

Foods high in insoluble fiber include:
- Fruits and vegetables
- High fiber breakfast cereals
- Wheat bran
- Whole grains
- Beans, peas, & lentils

How Much Do I Need?
- Aim for a goal of 20-35 grams of fiber per day, with 5-9 grams from soluble fiber.
- Start slowly. Introduce one new high fiber food at a time, and get used to it before adding another.
- Drink plenty of fluids as you increase your fiber intake. Your body needs liquid to help the fiber move through your digestive system.
Is Fish Good for Me?
Yes! Eating more fish is an easy way for many women to improve their diets. Fish and shellfish are excellent sources of lean protein and are low in unhealthy saturated fat.

What About Mercury?
Mercury is an element in the environment that accumulates in streams and oceans. Fish absorb mercury from the water. Nearly all fish contain traces of mercury, but it builds up the most in larger, longer-living fish. In pregnant women, high levels of mercury in the blood can harm the developing nervous system of the fetus. Because of this, pregnant women and women who might someday become pregnant should avoid the types of fish that are high in mercury.

Low Mercury Fish and Shellfish to Eat:
- Salmon
- Canned light tuna
- Shrimp
- Pollock
- Catfish
- Tilapia

High Mercury Fish to Avoid:
- Shark
- Swordfish
- King Mackerel
- Tilefish

How Much Is Safe?
It is recommended that women eat up to 12 ounces (about 2 meals) of a variety of low mercury fish and shellfish each week. If you choose a fish that is not as low in mercury, such as albacore (“white”) tuna or tuna steaks, limit your serving of this fish to 6 ounces. If you happen to eat more fish than this one week, just cut back for the next week or two. The recommended amount per week should be your average intake.
What are Omega-3 Fatty Acids?
Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of fat found in fish that have numerous health benefits. Research is showing that diets rich in omega-3 fat may:

- Reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke
- Decrease inflammation
- Reduce hypertension
- Improve depression
- Decrease symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis
- Reduce cancer risk

Good Sources of Omega-3 Fatty Acids:

- Salmon
- Sardines
- Tuna
- Herring
- Flax seed
- Canola oil
- Walnuts

Tips to Eat More Fish
- Substitute fish for another type of meal once or twice a week.
- Grocery shop for marinades or spices to use with fish.
- Try tuna salad on crackers for a snack.
- Prepare your fish by broiling, baking, or grilling instead of frying, since frying can add excess fat.

What About Supplements?
If you choose supplements instead of fish, select one with 300-1,000 mg of EPA & DHA. Do not take more than 3 g of fish oil per day.
Caffeine...

What is Caffeine?
Caffeine is a mild central nervous system stimulant found in coffee, tea, chocolate, soda, and some prescription and non-prescription drugs. It can cause anything from mild alertness to anxiety, upset stomach, and insomnia. Caffeine can be habit-forming, and many people who regularly consume caffeine experience withdrawal symptoms like headaches, drowsiness, and irritability when they cut it out.

How Much is Safe?
The key to safe caffeine consumption is moderation and common sense. For most healthy adults, about 200-300 mg of caffeine per day is thought to be safe (one “tall” coffee has 260 mg). However, everyone responds to caffeine differently, and some people experience extreme symptoms even at moderate doses of caffeine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Caffeine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 oz brewed coffee</td>
<td>100 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 oz espresso</td>
<td>100 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 oz latte or cappuccino</td>
<td>90 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 ml Red Bull</td>
<td>80 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 oz Mountain Dew</td>
<td>55 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 oz bottle iced tea</td>
<td>48 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 oz brewed tea</td>
<td>40 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 oz cola</td>
<td>38 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 oz dark chocolate</td>
<td>20 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 oz Sprite or 7-Up</td>
<td>0 mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Can I Reduce My Caffeine Intake and Still Have Energy?
- **Substitute** caffeine-free herbal teas, hot cider, or decaffeinated coffee for one or two cups of regular coffee or tea each day.
- **Mix** regular and decaf coffee, and **gradually reduce** the proportion of regular coffee.
- **Scan the ingredients list** on energy drink and soda labels. Limit drinks that contain caffeine and other similar ingredients such as guarana, green tea extract, kola nut, or yerba mate.
- If you are tired in the middle of the day, take a 15-20 minute nap or go for a brisk 10 minute walk.
- **Eat healthy, balanced meals or snacks every 4-6 hours.**
Why is Sleep So Important?

Getting adequate sleep is as important to a healthy lifestyle as eating right and exercising regularly. How much sleep you get has a strong impact on your physical and mental health and your ability to function throughout the day. Sleep is a dynamic process that includes five separate stages that you pass through several times each night. These stages progress from stage 1, which is light sleep, to REM sleep, which is the most restorative sleep stage.

What Happens When I Don’t Get Enough Sleep?

- Nodding off in class
- Mood shifts and irritability
- Stress and anxiety
- Reduced immunity to common infections like colds and the flu
- Impaired memory
- Reduced ability to think logically
- Reduced decision making skills
- Increased likelihood of accidents due to impaired motor skills and coordination

How Much Sleep Do I Need?

Teenagers need about 9 hours of sleep each night. Adults typically need 7-8 hours. However, individual differences exist, and some people may need as few as 6 hours or as many as 10 hours.

What Are Some Ways to Get More Sleep?

- Do not have any caffeine within 6 hours of going to bed.
- Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning. On weekends, try not to let this schedule get off by more than 2 hours.
- Instead of pulling an all-nighter before an exam, aim for at least 6 hours of sleep. Your memory and concentration will be much better.
- Limit alcohol, which prevents you from getting enough of the important REM sleep.
- Get 30 minutes of exercise daily, but not within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Limit naps to one hour and no later than 2 or 3 pm.
- Take time to relax before going to bed.
- If you continue to have difficulty sleeping, talk to your doctor.
Blood Pressure

What Do I Need to Know About High Blood Pressure?
High blood pressure, or hypertension, can lead to stroke, heart disease, and kidney disease. It affects one in four American adults, but since there are usually no symptoms, many don’t even know they have it.

How Do I Know if I Have High Blood Pressure?
Have your blood pressure checked regularly by a medical professional.

The following are the categories for blood pressure levels in adults:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Systolic</th>
<th>Diastolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>&lt; 120</td>
<td>&lt; 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-hypertension</td>
<td>120-139</td>
<td>80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 Hypertension</td>
<td>140-159</td>
<td>90-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 Hypertension</td>
<td>≥ 160</td>
<td>≥ 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Causes High Blood Pressure?
While the cause of high blood pressure is unknown, contributing risk factors include:

- Age (>35)
- Family history
- Smoking
- Stress
- Obesity
- Drug abuse
- Race (African-American)
- Inactivity
- Alcohol use
- Diet high in sodium
- Rarely, hormonal contraception

What Can I Do If I Have Hypertension?
Healthy lifestyle behaviors promote healthy blood pressure. Many people are able to avoid or decrease the use of blood pressure medications by doing the following:

- Avoid tobacco. Nicotine raises blood pressure.
- Limit alcohol. Women should have no more than 1 drink per day.
- Exercise regularly. Engage in moderate to vigorous exercise for at least 30 minutes most days of the week.
- Manage stress. Take time each day to meditate, pray, relax, sleep, and take care of yourself.
- Eat right. Follow the principles of the DASH diet—low fat, low—sodium, whole grains, and lots of fruits and vegetables.
Smoking Cessation

Why Stop Smoking?
In addition to heart and lung disease, smoking can lead to ulcers, diabetes, infertility, miscarriage, pregnancy complications, osteoporosis, wrinkles, and bad breath. Studies show that about half of “social” smokers become daily smokers within a year.

“Of UVa students who have tried to quit using tobacco, 58% no longer use and 34% now use less than they did”
2008 Health Behavior Survey from a random sample of 1,234 UVa students

How Can I Fight the Urge?
Staying smoke free can become a challenge. It’s important that you are prepared for situations when you may feel the urge to smoke. Here’s some tips that may help with the process.

- Identify “triggers” for smoking.
- Deep breathing and relaxation. The urge to smoke will often pass after a few minutes.
- Drink more fluids to help with dry mouth
- Distract yourself—go for a walk or listen to music
- Ask for help coping from friends and family
- Monitor your use of coffee and alcohol
- Eat healthy and exercise
- Try alternatives such as sugarless gum, hard candy, or raw vegetables
- Look into nicotine replacement therapy to find out if it is right for you

What Other Resources Are Available?
UVa Office of Health Promotion, Smoking Cessation 434-924-1509
Email: Quit@virginia.edu Call: 1-800-QUIT NOW
www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/tobaccofree.html
Exercise Basics

Why Exercise?
The health benefits of exercise are well documented. People who exercise experience decreased disease risk, improved mood, weight management, more restful sleep, and numerous other benefits.

How Much is Healthy?
- The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends 20-30 minutes of moderate to vigorous cardio 3-5 days per week to maintain health and reduce risk for disease.
- Additionally, the ACSM recommends 8-10 strength training exercises, 8-12 repetitions each, twice per week. Examples of strength training include weight lifting, push-ups, squats, pilates, and yoga.
- While it’s important to get enough exercise, too much can be detrimental. Over-exercising can lead to trouble sleeping, depression, fatigue, muscle and bone injuries, and menstrual irregularities. If exercise feels compulsive, seek help.

Exercise Tips
- If it’s difficult for you to find time to exercise, try doing it in shorter 10-minute bursts throughout the day.
- Drink enough water to stay hydrated and eat enough food to keep you fueled. Without enough food and water, your workouts won’t be nearly as beneficial.
- Take rest days during the week, and don’t exercise if you are tired, sick or injured.
- Do activities that you like! If you don’t like running or lifting weights, try a yoga or kickboxing class, or go for a walk or bike ride with a friend.
Alcohol Awareness

How Alcohol Affects Us
Essentially, alcohol is a drug...

Alcohol affects different people in different ways. While the effects of alcohol are determined predominantly by the amount of intake, some of the other characteristics that determine the way alcohol affects you include:

- Gender
- Mood
- Body Weight
- Type of Alcohol
- Full/Empty Stomach
- Speed of Consumption
- Use of Medication or Other Drugs

Stay in the Pleasure Zone (PZ)
If you choose to drink alcohol, maintaining about one drink per hour or less keeps you in the PZ, that relaxed, social, and happy state. Anything more and social skills decrease, judgment is greatly impaired, and undesirable behavior is probable.

Alcohol and Academics
Students who are out late partying often oversleep and miss classes. Someone who is hung over is more likely to sleep in or may be too sick to attend class. People who party several times a week can fall behind, Alcohol use can result in doing poorly on tests, papers, or projects, disciplinary issues, or other problems, including dropping out of school.

- “A” students average 3.1 drinks or less per week
- “B” students average 4.4 drinks per week
- “C” students averages 5.6 drinks per week
- “D” and “F” students average 9.5 drinks per week
Gynecological Health

How can a Gynecological Health Care Provider help me?
- Schedule **yearly gynecologic exams**. Your clinician will help you to determine whether you need a **pap test** and/or **screening** for **sexually transmitted infections**.
- **Birth control options.** If you are **thinking about** or **currently** are **sexually active** with a male partner, your clinician can help you explore pregnancy prevention options.
- **Painful or irregular periods, pain with intercourse,** or other gynecologic **concerns.** Your clinician can offer evaluation and treatment to help you feel better.
- **Pregnancy preparation.** Your clinician can help you prepare for a healthy and happy pregnancy.

What can I do to prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI’s)?
- Use a **condom** with every act of **vaginal** or **anal intercourse**.
- Use a **barrier method**, such as a **dental dam** or **condom**, when performing **oral sex**.
- Consider receiving the **HPV vaccine** to reduce your risk of **cervical cancer** and **genital warts**. For more info: [www.fda.gov/womens/getthefacts/pdfs/hpv.pdf](http://www.fda.gov/womens/getthefacts/pdfs/hpv.pdf) [www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/hpv-vaccine.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/hpv-vaccine.pdf)

Checklist for Breast Health
- Get a **clinical breast exam** at least every 3 years
- Develop **breast awareness** so you will notice any changes upon **self-examination**.
- Ask your provider about when to get a **mammogram**.
Additional Health Tips

- Schedule **yearly check-ups** with your primary health care provider. This allows you to discuss any current health concerns and to receive a basic examination.
- Talk to your health care provider about screening tests such as a **lipid profile** if you have a family history of high cholesterol or a **blood glucose test** if you have a family history of diabetes.
- **Brush your teeth** at least twice a day, and floss daily. Schedule appointments with your **dentist** every 6 months for a check-up and teeth cleaning.
- Always wear your **seatbelt** both when driving and when riding in another vehicle as a passenger.
- Put on a **helmet** when you ride a **bike**.
- Install a working **smoke detector** on every level of your home and inside bedrooms. Change the batteries at least yearly.
- Use **sunscreen**. Make sure your every day lotion and facial cream contain protection.
- Check inside yourself about your **relationships**… Are they healthy? Are you being hurt physically or emotionally? Do they make you happy?
- Get your **flu shot**. The nominal cost outweighs a week spent in bed with a fever and chills!
- Feeling **stressed**? Talk it out with family, friends, or a therapist in Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).