

# Healthy Calcium Choices

**Objective:**

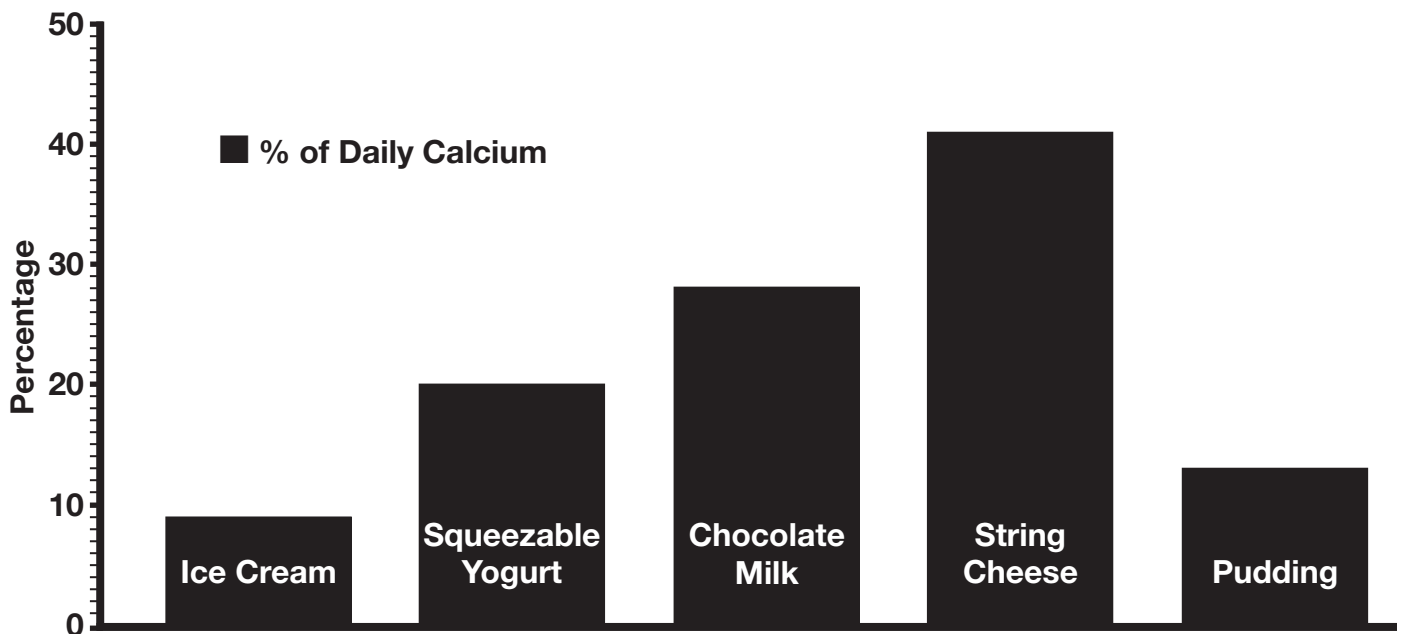
- Students will compare foods rich in calcium to those with lower amounts of calcium or no calcium.

**Materials Needed:**

- Pencil – one per student
- Paper – one per student
- Calcium Content of Foods worksheet (one per student)

**Lesson Introduction:**

1. Discuss the importance of consuming calcium-rich foods for bone health, especially at their current age and throughout their life. Explain that calcium is needed daily to:
  - combine with vitamin D and physical activity to build and maintain strong bones.
  - build bone mass, which is developing rapidly between the ages of 10 and 20.
  - build strong bones to prevent osteoporosis.
 Also explain that calcium is stored in the body and 99% of that calcium is stored in the bones and can be found in dairy products such as milk, yogurt and cheese.
2. Ask students to write down foods they have eaten today that contain calcium. Are they getting enough? (at least three cup equivalents of milk a day, 1 cup of milk, 8 oz. of yogurt, or 1½ cups of hard cheese) Remind students that an easy way to get three servings is to make milk the beverage of choice for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Encourage students to select low-fat (1%) or fat-free most often.



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**Activity:**

1. Explain the importance of choosing nutrient-rich calcium products. Have students focus on the calcium content for the activity.
2. Distribute the Calcium Content of Foods worksheet to the students.
3. Have students pick five of the foods listed on the worksheet they enjoy eating. Have them create a graph with the calcium content on the vertical plane and the food selection on the horizontal plane. See example below:

Ask students to identify which foods are better for bone health. Which foods have the most calcium per serving? (Answer: milk or milk products such as yogurt and cheese)

Have students share what their favorite high-calcium milk product is with the rest of the class.



**Activity Extension:**

**Language Arts:** Have students keep a daily food diary for one week listing the food they eat. At the end of the week, poll the students about how many days they had the three cups of milk or milk equivalent every day. Ask the students who had three milk products each day to share how they accomplished it and in what meals included milk or milk products. Ask the students who did not get three milk products each day to brainstorm ways they could incorporate more milk into their diets (drink milk during school lunch, eat breakfast at school and drink milk with breakfast, ask parents to melt low-fat cheese over vegetables, drink milk for a snack after school-white or flavored). If children don't or can't consume milk, they should choose lactose-free products or other calcium sources such as fortified foods and beverages.

**Cafeteria Connection:** Have students vote on their favorite calcium-rich milk product. Coordinate a class party including a variety of those dairy products for students to taste and enjoy or work with the school nutrition director to make it a part of the school menu.



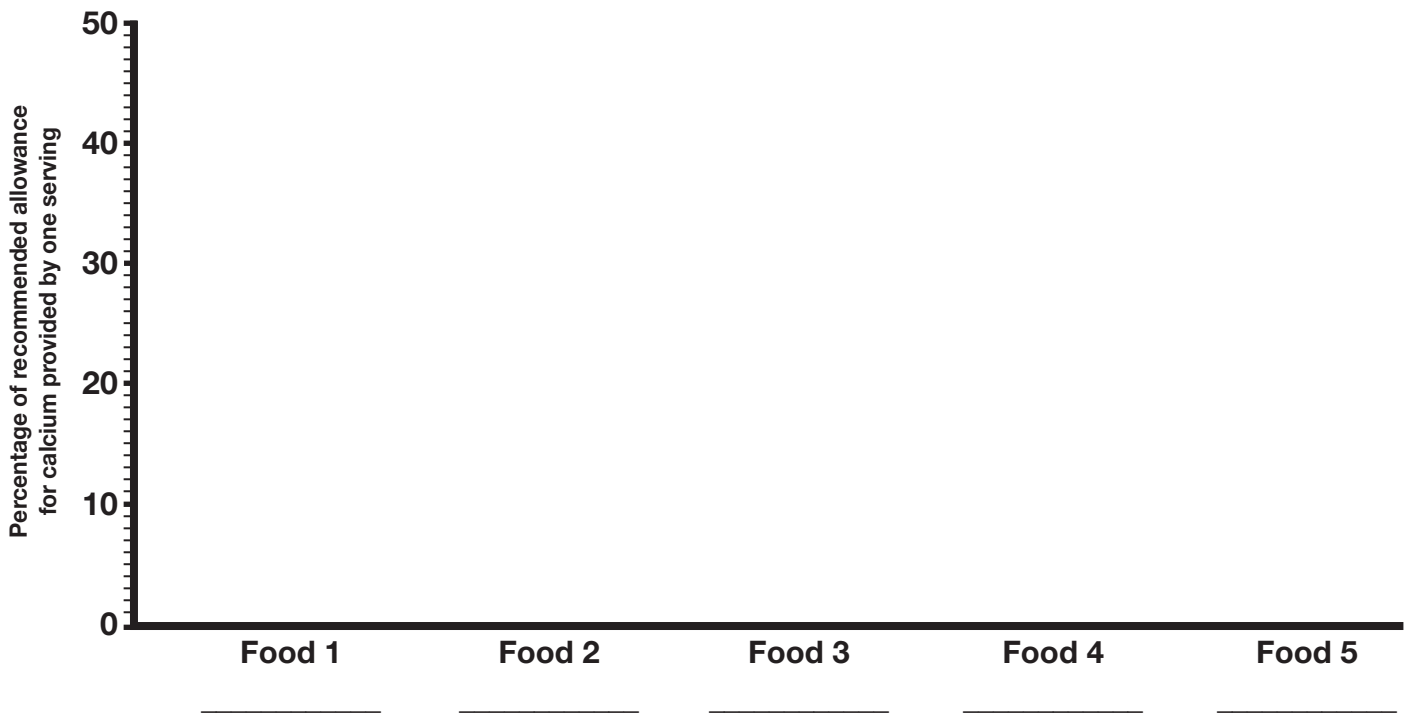
*Go low-fat or fat-free when you choose milk, yogurt, and other milk products. Get 3 cups every day! (for kids aged 2 to 8, it's 2 cups)*

**Ask your BASICS Nutrition Educator about incentive items or stickers to accompany this lesson.**

# Calcium Content of Foods

½ cup ice cream 9%	4 oz. squeezable yogurt 20%	1 ½ oz. American cheese 26%
1 oz. cream cheese 2%	½ cup pudding 13%	1 cup fruit punch 0%
1 cup 1% cottage cheese 6%	1 cup skim milk 28%	2 oz. string cheese 41%
1 oz. cheddar cheese 31%	1 cup chocolate milk 28%	12 oz. soft drink 0%
12 oz. yogurt smoothie 22%	1 cup drinkable yogurt 32%	1 ½ oz. Swiss cheese 41%
1 cup low-fat yogurt 31%	12 oz. sport drink 0%	½ cup frozen yogurt 10%
1 cup of strawberry milk 28%		

1. Select your favorite five foods in this list and graph the percentages of calcium each food provides.



2. What foods would you eat in one day to reach 100 percent? List each food and add up the percentages for a total for the day.