BUSINESS HEALTH MATTERS, Inc.

**Calcium: An essential element for life**

Calcium is crucial to maintain life. Just about every cell in the body, including those in the heart, nerves and muscles, relies on calcium to function properly. Because calcium is essential, the body ensures that a constant supply is always available; when calcium is not available the body will take it from our bones.
The main goal of good calcium nutrition is to assist the body to function properly and to maintain an adequate supply so that our bodies do not have to dip into our only calcium reservoir - our bones.

**How much calcium do we need?**

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| Age 4-8 | 800 mg of calcium |
| Age 9-18 | 1300 mg of calcium |
| Age 19-50 | 1000 mg of calcium |
| Age 50+ | 1500 mg of calcium |
| Pregnant or lactating women 18+ | 1000 mg of calcium |

**Pay attention to foods that cause calcium loss**
There is evidence to suggest that calcium loss through the urine is increased by the consumption of excess salt and caffeine.

**Salt (sodium):** Over 90% of sodium comes from food rather than from table salt.
**Caffeine:** If you consume more than four cups a day, have at least one glass of milk for every cup of caffeine-containing beverage. Skim milk products provide as much calcium as whole milk with the added advantage of less fat and cholesterol.

**If you eat few or no dairy products, monitor your calcium intake carefully.** Monitor your calcium intake very carefully. Some calcium-fortified soy beverages and orange juices may contain as much calcium as milk. Vegetables also provide calcium, as do fish products containing bones (canned salmon and sardines) and meat alternatives such as lentils and beans and almonds.

**Physical Activity and Healthy Bones**

For healthy bones we need to build bone mass when we are young, and maintain it as we age. Physical activity, combined with adequate calcium and Vitamin D, plays an important role in building bone mass and maintenance.

A **weight-bearing exercise** is one where bones and muscles work against the force of gravity. This is any exercise in which our feet and legs carry our weight. Activities like walking, jogging, aerobics, dancing, stair climbing and skating are all examples of weight-bearing exercise.

**Resistance exercise** involves moving objects or our own weight to create resistance. This type of exercise works and strengthens a particular muscle group, which in turn strengthens bone in that area. The uses of free weights, weight-training machines or exercise bands are examples of resistance exercise.