

Eat to Compete...Boning Up On Minerals

Karen Armstrong RD

In honour of Mother's Day, let's take a look at some nutrients that are important for active Moms and daughters.

Calcium is one mineral that women often don't get enough of. Calcium is necessary to build and repair bone tissue – critical for growing girls, and important for maintaining bone health as women age. Dairy products are an excellent source of calcium as well as a good source of the energy and protein needed by active women. When dairy products are not an option, ask your doctor for a referral to a dietitian to discuss other ways to get enough calcium.

Going hand in hand with calcium is Vitamin D. It's often called the sunshine vitamin because one of the ways to get this nutrient by exposing our skin to sunlight. This is a problem in winter because, although we may be active outside, there's not much skin being exposed. Fortunately, Vitamin D is added to foods like milk. However, if you're not choosing dairy products you may not be getting enough Vitamin D. Again, talk to a dietitian about ways to make sure you're not missing out on this important vitamin.

Iron is another mineral that's a concern for girls and young women. Iron is used by red blood cells, and poor iron stores are one of the most common nutrition problems in athletes. Choosing the recommended number of servings of meat, fish and poultry is an important step in getting enough iron. Iron is also available from vegetarian sources but the type of iron in these foods is not as available for the body to use. If you're vegetarian, make sure you are getting at least the minimum servings of vegetables and grains, and look for high iron choices from these two food groups.

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Manitoba Chicken Producers represents 143 farm families raising chickens that are free-run, grain-fed and free of added hormones. For more information on buying locally grown chicken, visit the Buying Guide at www.chicken.mb.ca