



Smart Food Choices: Consuming Milk is Good!

Fact Sheet FS1053



Cooperative Extension

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES

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In general, 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1 ½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese can be considered as 1 cup from the milk group.

The Dairy Group includes:

Milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soymilk. They provide calcium, vitamin D, potassium, protein, and other nutrients needed for good health throughout life.

Choices should be low fat or fat-free—to cut calories and saturated fat.

How much is needed?

Older children, teens, and adults need 3 cups a day, while children 4 to 8 years old need 2½ cups, and children 2 to 3 years old need 2 cups.

Calcium choices for those who do not consume milk products include:

Calcium fortified juices, cereals, breads, soy beverages, or rice beverages.

Canned fish (sardines, salmon with bones) soybeans and other soy products (soy-based beverages, soy yogurt, tempeh), some other dried beans, and some leafy greens (collard and turnip greens, kale, bok choy). The amount of calcium that can be absorbed from these foods varies.

Tips for Making Wise Choices

- Include milk as a beverage at meals. Choose fat-free or 1% low-fat milk.
- If you usually drink whole milk, switch gradually to fat-free milk, to lower saturated fat and calories. Try reduced fat (2%), then low-fat (1%), and finally fat-free (skim).
- If you drink cappuccinos or lattes—ask for them with fat-free (skim) milk.
- Have fat-free or low-fat yogurt as a snack.
- Make a dip for fruits or vegetables from yogurt.
- Make fruit-yogurt smoothies in the blender.
- Top cut-up fruit with flavored yogurt for a quick dessert.
- For dessert, make chocolate or butterscotch pudding with fat-free or low-fat milk.
- Top casseroles, soups, stews, or vegetables with shredded low-fat cheese.
- Top a baked potato with fat-free or low-fat yogurt.

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For those who choose not to consume milk products

If you avoid milk because of lactose intolerance, choose lactose-reduced or low-lactose alternatives within the milk group, such as cheese, yogurt, or lactase-treated milk,

or

Consume the enzyme lactase before consuming milk products. Enzyme preparations can be added to milk to lower the lactose content.

Health Benefits

- Diets rich in milk/milk products help build and maintain bones throughout the lifecycle. This may reduce the risk of osteoporosis.
- Drinking or eating milk products is especially important to bone health during childhood and adolescence, when bone mass is being built.
- Diets that include milk products tend to have a higher overall nutritional quality. If sweetened milk products are chosen (flavored milk, yogurt, drinkable yogurt, desserts), the added sugars also count as part of the discretionary calorie allowance. (Those calories above your daily needs.)

Keep it safe to eat

- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or any products made from unpasteurized milk.
- Chill (refrigerate) perishable food promptly and defrost foods properly. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers as soon as possible. If food has been left at temperatures between 40° and 140° F for more than two hours, discard it, even though it may look and smell good.
- Separate raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods.

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