

Dairy and School Wellness

Federal law requires that all districts participating in the National School Lunch program have local wellness policies in place by July 1, 2006. Make sure your policies provide children with access to the dairy they need for growth and development.

Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Are Among the Most Nutritious Choices at School

Research shows that kids who get recommended amounts of dairy foods have better nutrient intakes overall.¹ Milk, yogurt and cheese are naturally nutrient-packed, together providing nine essential nutrients kids need every day including calcium, protein, potassium, phosphorus, vitamins D, A and B12, riboflavin and niacin.

- Calcium helps build and maintain strong bones and teeth.
- Vitamin D helps promote the absorption of calcium.
- Protein builds and repairs muscle tissue.
- Potassium regulates the body's fluid balance and helps maintain normal blood pressure and muscle activity.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines and MyPyramid Encourage 3 a day of dairy²

Consuming 3 cups per day of fat-free or low-fat milk or equivalent milk products is encouraged for:

- Healthy bones: Diets rich in milk and milk products can reduce the risk of low bone mass throughout the lifecycle.
- Better nutrient intakes: Milk product consumption has been associated with overall diet quality and adequacy of intake of many nutrients.
- Key nutrients for kids: Dairy provides calcium, potassium and magnesium; three of the five nutrients most children don't get enough of.
- Weight: Milk and milk products should not be avoided because of concerns that these foods lead to weight gain.

Flavored Milks: A Naturally Nutrient-Rich Choice

According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, small amounts of sugars added to nutrient-dense foods, such as reduced-fat milk products, may increase a person's intake of such foods by enhancing the palatability of these products, thus improving nutrient intake without contributing excessive calories.³ Flavored milk's contribution to the added sugar in the diets of kids ages 6-17 is minimal, just 2.2 percent.⁴

Flavored milks are nutrient-rich and provide the exact same nutrients and benefits as unflavored milk. Both contain a high proportion of essential nutrients in relation to their calorie content. Children who consume flavored milk have higher calcium intakes, but similar total fat and added sugar intakes compared with children who do not drink flavored milk.⁷

Kids Drink More Milk When Schools Provide Great Flavors, Plastic Containers

- Kids drink more milk when schools offer it in plastic, re-sealable containers in different sizes, various flavors, merchandising locations (vending or ala carte) and ice-cold refrigeration.⁶
- Kids love the great taste and drink more milk when it's available in flavors like chocolate, vanilla and strawberry.⁶
- Research shows that children who consume flavored milk have greater total milk intake, less soft drink and fruit drink intake, but similar fruit juice intake, compared with children who do not drink flavored milk.⁷
- Milk provides more calcium and protein per penny compared to any other foods served on school lunch menus.⁸

Healthy Dairy Varieties for Vending

With kids spending more than half their day in school, it's important that they get the nutrients they need while they're there. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends offerings such as real fruit juices, water and low fat white or flavored milk be provided in preference over sweetened drinks in school vending machines.⁵ Milk, flavored milk, yogurt, and yogurt drinks taste great and are nutrient-rich alternatives to typical vending machine options. Natural cheeses, like mozzarella string cheese, also provide students with a portable, nutrient-dense choice.

Vending is one way of helping address the concern that most children don't get the recommended three daily dairy servings. Serving sizes of products available in school vending differ throughout the U.S., with variable package and portion size offerings. One serving of dairy is equal to 1 cup of milk, 1 cup of yogurt or 1.5 ounces of natural cheese. An 8-oz bottle of milk provides a single serving of milk, and a 16-ounce bottle, two. Since most kids don't get enough dairy every day, two servings in one package may be the best way for some to get the recommended amount and benefit from its nutrients.

Variety of Choice Helps Kids Meet Dietary Guidelines

Dairy foods contain different levels of fat to meet consumers' unique taste and nutrition needs. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend a limit of 20-35% of calories from fat each day. Schools should provide children with choices from a variety of nutrient-rich foods, including dairy products, to help ensure they meet these guidelines and get the nutrients they need.

- NHANES data indicates that children and adolescents (ages 4-18) who drink any milk at all – regardless of fat level – have lower serum LDL cholesterol compared with those who consume no milk.⁹
- NHANES data show no differences in LDL cholesterol levels between those children who consume any milk and those who do not consume milk.¹⁰
- NHANES data indicate that children who drink 2% milk have no differences in serum lipids (total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides) compared to those who drink 1% or nonfat milk.^{9,10}

Choose Dairy Foods First

For those with lactose intolerance, the 2005 Dietary Guidelines suggests the most reliable and easiest way to derive the health benefits associated with milk and milk product consumption is to choose alternatives within the milk food group, such as yogurt or lactose-free milk, or to consume the enzyme lactase (such as Lactaid tablets) prior to the consumption of milk products. Studies show milk is the most reliable source of calcium, superior to calcium-fortified soy and rice beverages and many orange juice brands.¹¹ Beyond calcium, milk, yogurt and cheese provide essential nutrients kids need every day including protein, potassium, phosphorus, vitamins D, A and B12, riboflavin and niacin.

Nutritious Choices Help Fuel Academic Performance

Educators and health professionals agree that poor diet and eating habits affect academic performance.¹²

Most Kids Don't Get Enough Dairy

Seventy-seven percent of children ages 9-19 do not meet their recommended dairy intake.¹³

For additional information on dairy's role in school wellness, visit www.nutritionexplorations.org or contact your local Dairy Council.



NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL

¹ Albertson AM, et al. Ready-to-eat cereal consumption: Its relationship with BMI and nutrient intake of children aged 4 to 12 years. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 2003; 103:1613-1619.

² Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005 [6th Edition]. www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.

³ Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005 [6th Edition]. www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.

⁴ The NPD Group Nutrient Intake Panel 3 years ending Nov. 2004.

⁵ AAP Policy Statement: Soft Drinks in Schools. *Pediatrics*, 2004; 113(1): 152-154.

⁶ National Dairy Council and American School Food Service Association. The School Milk Pilot Test. Beverage Marketing Corporation for NDC and ASFSA, 2002. www.nationaldairyCouncil.org.

⁷ Johnson, et al. The nutritional consequences of flavored milk consumption by school-aged children and adolescents in the United States. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 2002; 102(6): 853-856.

⁸ Shanklin CW & Wie S. Nutrient contributions per 100 kcal and per penny for the 5 meal components in school lunch: Entree, milk, vegetable/fruit, bread/grain, and miscellaneous. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 2001; 101(11): 1358-1361.

⁹ National Dairy Council, unpublished data based on the National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHANES), 1988-1994.

¹⁰ National Dairy Council, unpublished data based on the National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHANES), 1999-2000.

¹¹ Heaney R, et al. Not All Calcium-fortified Beverages Are Equal. *Nutrition Today*, 2005; 40(1): 39-44.

¹² National Association of State Boards of Education Policy Update, Vol. 5, No. 19.

¹³ National Dairy Council, unpublished data based on the National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHANES), 1999-2002.