

# The Truth About Flavored Milk in Schools



School meals contribute significantly to the health and well-being of our nation's youth and in the lives of families and communities. Dairy foods, including unflavored and flavored milk, make important nutrient and health contributions to school meals.

Low-fat (1%) chocolate and other flavored dairy milks (fat-free or low-fat) can be offered in school meal programs, with a requirement that unflavored milk be available at each school meal service. Schools may choose to provide lactose-free and reduced-lactose dairy milk to students without needing a written request from a parent or guardian.<sup>1</sup>

Flavored dairy milk can help schools address the nutrition, taste and health needs of the students they serve. [Learn more about the myths and realities of flavored milk in the school cafeteria.](#)

Myth	Reality
<p><b>Flavored milk is not as nutritious as white milk</b></p>	<p>Dairy milk, whether flavored or unflavored, is a good or excellent source of 13 essential nutrients, including calcium, vitamin D and potassium – nutrients of public health concern that many students don't get enough of in their diets.</p> <p>The Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the American Academy of Pediatrics recognize that a small amount of added sugars, which fall within the daily calorie limit, can be used to increase the palatability and appeal of nutrient-rich foods, such as low-fat flavored milk.<sup>2-3</sup></p>
<p><b>Flavored milk contributes too much sugar to children's diets</b></p>	<p>Since 2007, the U.S. dairy community has reduced added sugars in school milk by 54%. Currently, the average added sugar content in 8 ounces of flavored school milk is 7.6 grams. The average flavored milk served in schools has 126 calories – just 29 more calories than unflavored milk.<sup>4</sup></p> <p>Flavored milk contributes only 4% of added sugars in the diets of children 2-18 years<sup>5</sup> and is not associated with an increased body mass index (BMI).<sup>6</sup></p> <p>In fact, the consumption of flavored milk is associated with higher total milk consumption and better overall diet quality without any adverse -impact on weight.<sup>7-11</sup></p>
<p><b>Students will still choose milk regardless if there is a flavored option</b></p>	<p>Chocolate milk is the most popular milk choice in schools<sup>4</sup> and children drink more and waste less when flavored milk is available.<sup>12</sup></p> <p>Removal of flavored milk from schools can lead to a decrease in total milk consumption, which could negatively impact children's nutrient consumption.<sup>13-14</sup></p>

## Myth

**Students with lactose intolerance can't drink dairy milk (flavored or unflavored)**

## Reality

Lactose intolerance is a real condition that affects many Americans, particularly people of color and Native Americans. Lactose-free dairy milk has the same nutritional profile as regular milk, just without the lactose.

Lactose-free dairy milk meets the school meal pattern requirements for fluid milk. Schools may choose to provide lactose-free and reduced-lactose dairy milk to participants without needing to obtain a written request from a parent or guardian.<sup>1</sup>

## School Milk Nutritional Benefits

- ✓ **13 essential nutrients**, including high-quality protein, calcium, potassium, phosphorus, zinc, selenium, iodine, niacin, riboflavin, pantothenic acid and vitamins A, D and B12<sup>15</sup>
- ✓ **3 of the 4 nutrients of concern for under-consumption**, as identified by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans - vitamin D, calcium and potassium<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ **Number one source of protein, vitamin D, calcium, and potassium** in the diets of children ages 2-18<sup>5</sup>
- ✓ **Better bone health** and lower risk for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease<sup>16-17</sup>
- ✓ **Immune-supporting** protein, zinc, selenium and vitamins A, D and B12<sup>16-17</sup>
- ✓ **Flavored milk contributes just 4% of added sugars** in the diets of children 2-18 years, while unflavored milk contains no added sugars<sup>5</sup>
- ✓ **Children who drink flavored milk consume more milk and have significantly higher intakes of vitamin D, calcium, potassium and other nutrients**<sup>7-11</sup>
- ✓ **Flavored milk helps increase milk consumption and decrease waste**<sup>11-14</sup>

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