

# NUTRITION BITES

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## “Got Milk?” Cow’s Milk: Is it Good for You?

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Today, there is significant debate about whether dairy is necessary in our diet. While consuming cow’s milk and other milk-based products has unquestionable benefits, some question whether the positives outweigh the negatives.

In the 1990s, magazine and television commercials frequently featured celebrities sporting milk mustaches. However, despite this famous campaign, individuals have been shifting away from dairy, and dairy alternatives are growing in popularity. What has happened to traditional dairy milk?

Since the 2000s, individuals seeking to lose weight have gravitated toward the Paleo and Ketogenic diets, which largely exclude dairy products. This style of dieting began to raise doubts about the safety of dairy for human consumption.

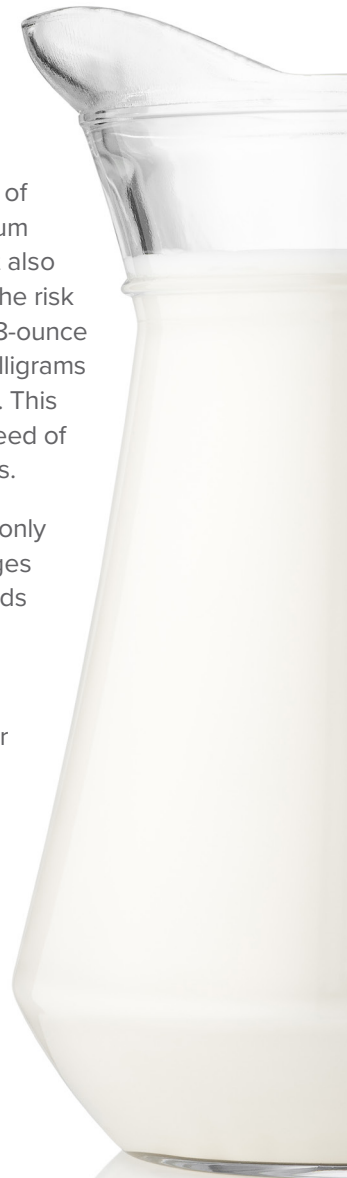
### What are the benefits of milk?

Milk has 18 of the 22 essential nutrients, making it a nutritional rock star, and as a fluid, it is a simple and efficient way to get many vitamins and minerals. Protein and calcium are the primary nutrients received from milk and dairy products.

Additionally, Americans underconsume 10 essential nutrients, according to the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements. Milk provides three of the four nutrients noted to be of public health concern: calcium, potassium and vitamin D. The fourth is fiber, which is absent in milk. This means that adverse health outcomes are linked to inadequate intake of these nutrients. Of the other six nutrients (vitamins A, E, C, magnesium, iron and choline), milk is a source of vitamin A, magnesium and choline.

### What do these nutrients do for our bodies?

- **Build strong bones and teeth.** Our bodies cannot make calcium, so we must get it from food. Most of us realize the importance of calcium for young, growing children, but it also benefits older adults by reducing the risk of osteoporosis and fractures. An 8-ounce cup of milk provides about 300 milligrams of calcium, depending on the type. This is 25% to 33% of an adult’s daily need of 1000 milligrams to 1200 milligrams.
- **High in protein.** Milk is one of the only natural, complete protein beverages with 8 grams per cup. Protein builds and repairs cells in our muscles, bones, skin and nails. It also oxygenates our red blood cells, regulates hormones, improves our immune system and aids muscle function, among other benefits.
- **Help with managing diabetes.** Pairing protein with carbohydrates can help prevent sharp increases in blood sugar. Promising studies are finding that regular intake of low-fat milk or yogurt, which are sources of both carbohydrates and protein, can help manage diabetes.



## What type of milk should we drink?

Consider the options based on your preferences and health goals when choosing milk. There are a few facts for the four most common types of dairy milk reported in 8 ounces or one cup:

| Type              | % Milk Fat | Calories | Total Fat |
|-------------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| Skim/Non-fat milk | 0%         | 83       | 0 grams   |
| Low-fat milk      | 1%         | 102      | 2.5 grams |
| Reduced-fat milk  | 2%         | 122      | 5 grams   |
| Whole milk        | 3.25%      | 149      | 8 grams   |

The main difference between the types of milk is the amount of fat. The fact that they all contain the same amount of other nutrients is essential. Lower-fat milk, yogurt and cheese are recommended for overall good health.

Children under 2 are the exception; their developing brains need the fat in whole milk. After age 2, switch to low-fat or continue whole milk, depending on the child's growth and development.

## What are some concerns that cause people to pause drinking milk?

- **Cancer and milk:** Some studies suggest that drinking large amounts of milk, which is about four or five 8-ounce cups every day, can increase the risk for prostate cancer. Thus, limiting low-fat milk and dairy products to one serving a day is advised for prostate cancer survivors. On the other hand, studies indicate that consuming milk and dairy products can decrease the risk of colorectal and premenopausal breast cancers.
- **Heart disease and milk:** Whole and 2% milk are high in saturated fat, and the risk for heart disease increases with consuming large amounts of saturated fats daily.

Newer research suggests that it may not have the negative effects that were previously thought, and if your taste preference is for whole or 2% milk, you should opt for it. Be mindful that if you eat many other foods rich in saturated fats, such as full-fat cheeses, yogurts and milk, reach for the low-fat milk to help keep your intake in check.

- **Hormones and milk:** Milk has growth hormones that can cause early puberty. It's full of antibiotics, and humans cannot process cow's milk.
  1. Experts believe bovine growth hormones do not survive the acidic environment of the gastrointestinal tract or the digestive process and thus have no hormonal activity in humans. Experts believe that if there is an early onset of puberty (as it usually occurs between 8 and 12 years of age), it is linked to genetics, improved nutrition or the prevalence of obesity.
  2. All milk in grocery stores is antibiotic-free. Strict government standards and protocols exist for milk production, prohibiting milk with antibiotics from being sold in stores.
  3. Lastly, most of us are equipped with lactase, an enzyme that helps digest lactose, the natural sugar in milk. Lactose-free milk is available for people who have difficulty digesting lactose. Lactose intolerance can be presented as a bloating stomach, gas, stomach gurgling or pain, nausea, and diarrhea. Lactose-free milk is treated with the lactase enzyme, reducing lactose or "predigesting" it, eliminating the symptoms of lactose intolerance. Everything else in lactose-free milk, including the vitamins, minerals, protein and fat, remains the same.

The plant-based eating pattern has gained prominence in recent years, emphasizing a diet where at least two-thirds comes from plant sources like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans and plant-based protein. Lean protein sources like chicken, fish and dairy products can make up the remaining one-third or less.

"Got milk?" is still alive and well.



## Featured Recipe

# Anti-Inflammatory Cherry-Spinach Smoothie

For complete recipe and nutrition facts: [Eating Well](#)

Prep Time: **5 minutes**

Cook Time: **NA**

Total Time: **5 minutes**

Servings: **1**



### INGREDIENTS

**1 cup** low-fat milk

**1 cup** frozen cherries

**½ cup** baby spinach leaves

**1 tablespoon** salted almond butter

**1 (½ inch)** piece peeled ginger

**1 teaspoon** chia seeds, plus more for garnish

**¼ cup** mashed ripe avocado

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Place** milk in a blender, and **add** cherries, spinach, avocado, almond butter, ginger and chia seeds.
- 2. Puree** until the mixture is smooth.
- 3. Pour** into a glass and then **garnish** with more chia seeds, if desired.

### Nutritional Information:

Serving Size: 1¾ cup

Calories: 410; Total Carbohydrates: 47g; Dietary Fiber: 10g; Protein: 17g; Total Fat: 20g; Saturated Fat: 4g; Sodium: 169mg.

