Dairy Australia

GOOD HEALTH AND NUTRITION

MILK

Cow's milk is a natural source of nutrition. It's the biggest contributor of calcium to the Australian diet and provides a range of other nutrients for good health. Cow's milk has been enjoyed for thousands of years and is used to make some of our favourite foods, including cheese, yoghurt and custard.

What's in milk?

Milk is a natural food that comes straight from cows. Australian milk is sourced and produced locally. It travels from the farm to the factory where it is pasteurised (heated to destroy any harmful bacteria) and homogenised (mixed for a consistent texture and taste).

There really is a milk to suit everyone's needs. The main types of milk are:

- **Regular or full-fat:** contains on average 3.8% milk fat and no less than 3.2% milk fat. Also known as full-cream or whole milk, it has a rich and creamy texture.
- **Reduced-fat:** contains approximately 2% milk fat.
- **Low-fat:** contains less than 1.5% milk fat.
- **No-fat/skim:** contains no more than 0.15% milk fat. Milk solids, which are produced when water is removed from liquid milk, are added to optimise the taste.

In addition, there are a range of modified milks on the market to cater for different dietary needs, including high calcium, high protein and low lactose. Fortified milks are also available, enriched with omega-3 fatty acids, plant sterols or vitamin D. Long-life or Ultra Heat Treated (UHT) milk is another type of milk which contains the same nutritional goodness as fresh milk and has been heated to higher temperatures, giving it an extended shelf life.

Are you having enough?

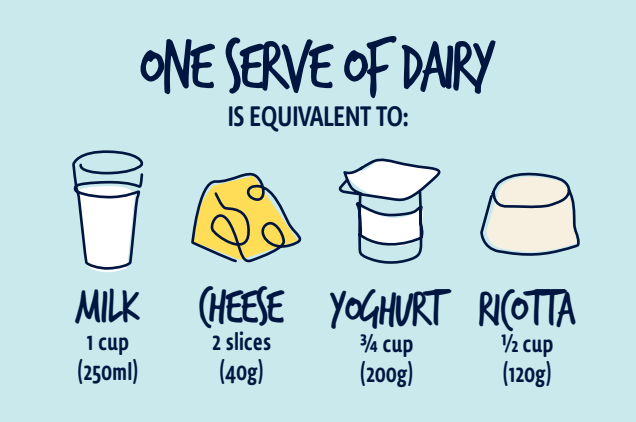
Milk belongs to the dairy food group which is one of the five food groups recommended for good health. Around eight out of 10 Australian adults fail to get their minimum recommended intake from the dairy food group and as a result, less than half of the population are getting enough calcium in their diet every day.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend a range of serves from the dairy food group every day depending on your age and gender – use the following table to see how much milk, cheese and yoghurt and/or alternatives are recommended for you.

Minimum recommended number of serves from the dairy food group

	Age (years)	No. of serves per day
Men	19–70	2 ½
	70+	3 ½
Women	19–50	2 ½
	50+	4
	Pregnant or breast feeding	2 ½
Boys	2-3	1 ½
	4-8	2
	9-11	2 ½
	12-18	3 ½
Girls	2-3	1 ½
	4-8	1 ½
	9-11	3
	12-18	3 ½

*Adapted from: 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. The dairy food group includes milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives.**



*Alternatives include: 250ml soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml.

Milk and health

All varieties of milk, from regular-fat to skim, provide a natural combination of essential nutrients. In addition to calcium, milk is the biggest source of vitamin B12, iodine, riboflavin, phosphorus and potassium in the Australian diet.

The current Australian Dietary Guidelines acknowledge that consuming milk, cheese and yoghurt, is linked to a reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, hypertension (high blood pressure), some cancers and type 2 diabetes and is not linked to weight gain or obesity. These health benefits apply to both regular-fat and reduced-fat varieties.

Healthy bones and teeth

The key ingredients for strong bones are weight-bearing exercise, calcium-rich foods and vitamin D (ideally from safe sun exposure). Milk has long been known for its high calcium content (containing around 300mg of calcium per serve) and its beneficial effect on bone mass. Building bone mass during childhood and adolescence helps ensure strong bones during the adult years and a reduced risk of osteoporosis later in life. Adults lose bone mass as they get older, so calcium rich foods continue to be important for maintaining bone and minimising fracture risk and the associated disability and reduced quality of life.

Milk also contains key nutrients for healthy teeth, including phosphorus, calcium and the protein casein, helping to protect against decay. The acidity level (or pH) of milk means that it is a non-erosive drink. The Australian Dietary Guidelines highlight milk or water as the preferred drinks for children.

What about lactose intolerance?

People with diagnosed lactose intolerance do not need to eliminate milk or milk products from their diet. Up to 250ml of milk may be well tolerated if broken up throughout the day and consumed with other foods. Most cheeses contain virtually no lactose and yoghurt contains 'good' bacteria that help to digest lactose, so should be well tolerated. Lactose-free milks are also available.

What about milk alternatives?

According to the Australian Dietary Guidelines, milk alternatives refer to calcium-enriched legume/bean/cereal beverages such as calcium-enriched soy, rice and oat drinks. To qualify as an alternative, they must contain at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml.

These plant-based beverages do not contain the same natural package of essential nutrients as milk and do not have the same proven health benefits.

MILK ALSO CONTAINS HIGH QUALITY PROTEIN WITH ALL ESSENTIAL AMINO ACIDS, UNLIKE MANY VEGETABLE PROTEIN SOURCES.

Most plant foods don't contain much calcium and those that do often contain other substances that can interfere with your body's ability to absorb it efficiently. For example, to get the same amount of calcium as one 250ml glass of milk, you would need to eat 32 brussels sprouts or 21 cups of raw chopped spinach or five cups of cooked broccoli or one cup of dry roasted almonds.

What about flavoured milk?

Flavoured milk contains the same nutrients as plain milk and provides a nutrient-rich drink choice for children and adolescents compared to soft drinks and fruit juice.

Research has shown flavoured milk consumers have no higher intakes of added sugars than plain milk drinkers and the consumption of flavoured milk has been shown to have no adverse effects on children's body weight. Flavoured milk drinkers are also more likely to meet the Estimated Average Requirement (EAR) for calcium than exclusively plain milk drinkers.

FAST FACTS ON MILK

Milk contains the perfect balance of fluid and electrolytes to effectively rehydrate post exercise.

Milk has a low glycaemic index (GI) so helps keep you fuller for longer – a smoothie at breakfast will get you through the morning.

You might have heard the word permeate in relation to milk. Permeate simply refers to the lactose, vitamins and minerals naturally found in milk. It's sometimes removed and added back to milk for standardising to ensure you get the same great tasting product every time.

A2 milk contains the A2 protein only. Regular milk contains both A1 and A2 proteins. There is limited evidence to suggest A2 milk is better for you than regular milk, so enjoy whichever you prefer.

4458.7 | May 2022