



Senior Series

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Putting MyPyramid on Your Table

Milk Group

MyPyramid is a guide to help people of any age plan a healthy diet. As we age, we need to plan more carefully the food that we choose in order to stay healthy. Individual calorie and nutrient needs change over time. This series of *Putting MyPyramid on Your Table* can help you choose foods that fit into a daily food plan to maintain good health.



Milk Group
Get your calcium-rich foods

MyPyramid.gov

Calcium

As we age, our need for calcium increases. Men and women over age 50 should consume at least 1,200 milligrams of calcium a day to help maintain bone mass and reduce the risk of osteoporosis. One cup of milk provides about 300 milligrams of calcium.

Studies have shown that calcium offers many other health benefits and may play an important role in reducing the risk for high blood pressure and obesity.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a painful and crippling disease that results when the bones become too thin. This can happen with age and happens most

often to women. Getting enough calcium throughout life is one of the best ways to prevent osteoporosis.

Good Sources of Calcium

The best dietary sources of calcium are foods found in the milk group. Some of these are milk, cheese, and yogurt. Consuming an average of four cups a day of low-fat dairy products will help keep bones strong.

What counts as one cup? Choose eight ounces or one cup of milk or yogurt, or 1½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese.

Dairy products also contain other nutrients such as protein, vitamin D, potassium, riboflavin, magnesium, and vitamin B-12.

Additional sources of calcium include salmon with edible bones, calcium fortified orange juice, breads, cereals, and dark green leafy vegetables.

Choose Low Fat Options

Removing the fat from dairy products does not remove calcium, so choose skim or 1% milk more often to lower the risk of heart disease. There is no difference in the cooking properties of milk with lower butterfat contents.

When using cheese, cream, or sour cream, look for reduced fat or fat-free products. To reduce the amount of fat in a recipe, try adding a very small amount of strong-flavored, high-fat cheese, such as Parmesan, to a baked dish. This will add flavor without adding extra fat.

Evaporated skim milk is thick and creamy. It is ideal for use in sauces and desserts that call for higher fat creams. Fat-free cream cheese is suitable for spreads, but it does not hold up well for recipes where beating or baking is required. In those recipes, a kind of reduced-fat cream cheese called Neufchatel works very well and is lower in fat, saturated fat, and calories than regular cream cheese.

If You're Lactose Intolerant

Lactose intolerance is when your body is not able to digest lactose, which is the sugar found in dairy products. Symptoms include gas, cramps, diarrhea, and nausea within an hour of eating a bowl of ice cream or drinking a glass of milk. Our body's ability to break down lactose decreases with age.

Even if you are lactose intolerant, you can still enjoy the benefits of dairy foods. Yogurt contains a lower amount of lactose, and cheese is naturally low

in lactose. When consumed with a meal, small portions of milk allow your body to break down lactose. Many lactose-free products are now available at the grocery store.

Consume a variety of nutrient dense foods and beverages within and among the basic food groups while choosing foods that limit the intake of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol.

Milk is an important part of MyPyramid. Look for other *Putting MyPyramid on Your Table* fact sheets.

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