10 tips

Nutrition Education Series

got your dairy today?

10 tips to help you eat and drink more fat-free or low-fat dairy foods



The Dairy Group includes milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soymilk. They provide calcium, vitamin D, potassium, protein, and other nutrients needed for good health throughout life. Choices should be low-fat or fat-free—to cut calories and saturated fat. How much is needed? Older children, teens, and adults need 3 cups* a day, while children 4 to 8 years old need $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups, and children 2 to 3 years old need 2 cups.

"skim" the fat
Drink fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk. If you currently
drink whole milk, gradually switch to lower fat versions.
This change cuts calories but doesn't reduce calcium or other
essential nutrients.

2 boost potassium and vitamin D, and cut sodium
Choose fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt more often than cheese. Milk and yogurt have more potassium and less sodium than most cheeses. Also, almost all milk and many yogurts are fortified with vitamin D.

ingredient switches
When recipes such as dips call for sour cream, substitute plain yogurt. Use fat-free evaporated milk instead of cream, and try ricotta cheese as a substitute for cream cheese.

choose sweet dairy foods with care Flavored milks, fruit yogurts, frozen yogurt, and puddings can contain a lot of added sugars. These added sugars are empty calories. You need the nutrients in dairy foods—not these empty calories.

caffeinating?

If so, get your calcium along with your morning caffeine boost. Make or order coffee, a latte, or cappuccino with fat-free or low-fat milk.

can't drink milk?

If you are lactose intolerant, try lactose-free milk, drink smaller amounts of milk at a time, or try soymilk (soy beverage). Check the Nutrition Facts label to be sure your soymilk has about 300 mg of calcium. Calcium in some leafy greens is well absorbed, but eating several cups each day to meet calcium needs may be unrealistic.

take care of yourself and your family
Parents who drink milk and eat dairy foods show their kids that it is important. Dairy foods are especially important to build the growing bones of kids and teens. Routinely include

low-fat or fat-free dairy foods with meals

and snacks—for everyone's benefit.



top off your meals



Use fat-free or low-fat milk on cereal and oatmeal. Top fruit salads and baked potatoes with low-fat yogurt instead of higher fat toppings such as sour cream.

choose cheeses with less fat
Many cheeses are high in saturated fat. Look for
"reduced-fat" or "low-fat" on the label. Try different
brands or types to find the one that you like.

what about cream cheese?

Regular cream cheese, cream, and butter *are not* part of the dairy food group. They are high in saturated fat and have little or no calcium.

* What counts as a cup in the Dairy Group? 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese.

