



# Got your dairy today?

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 2½ cups, and children 2 to 3 years old need 2 cups.

**1 “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 saturated fat and 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.

**3 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.



**4 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.

**5 What about cream cheese?**  
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.

**6 Switch ingredients**  
When recipes such as dips call for sour cream, substitute plain yogurt. Use fat-free evaporated milk instead of cream, and try low-fat or fat-free ricotta cheese as a substitute for cream cheese.



**7 Limit added sugars**  
Flavored milks and yogurts, frozen yogurt, and puddings can contain a lot of added sugars. Get your nutrients from dairy foods with fewer or no added sugars.

**8 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.

**9 Can’t drink milk?**  
If you are lactose intolerant, try yogurt, lactose-free milk, or soymilk (soy beverage) to get your calcium. Calcium in some leafy greens is well absorbed, but eating several cups each day to meet calcium needs may be unrealistic.



**10 Take care of yourself and your family**  
Parents who drink milk and eat dairy foods show their kids that it is important for their health. Dairy foods are important to build the growing bones of kids and teens and to maintain bone health in adulthood.

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