

Fact Sheet

SAFEGUARDING THE HEALTH
OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN:

The Importance of Dairy Foods in Child Nutrition Programs

Top 3 Reasons Lactose-Free Milk Is Important in Child Nutrition Programs

The Dietary Guidelines, numerous health organizations and the latest science support the continued role of lactose-free milk as a core component of child nutrition programs as well as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Lactose-free milk is preferred over milk alternatives

- Across ethnic groups, lactose-free milk is favored over an unflavored soy beverage. In a recent taste test of flavored and unflavored lactose-free 1% milk compared to flavored and unflavored low-fat soy beverage, children and teens ages 8-16 including Caucasians, African-Americans and Hispanics, preferred flavored (chocolate) lactose-free 1% milk compared to flavored (chocolate) low-fat soy beverage.¹
- Unlike cow's milk, milk substitute beverages are poor natural sources of calcium, so they must be fortified to be calcium-rich. The calcium in some calcium-fortified soy beverages may not be as well absorbed as the calcium in dairy milk.^{2,3} Soy beverages do not provide the same nutrient package as milk. Furthermore, kids of all ethnicities overwhelmingly choose dairy over soy beverages, because they prefer the taste.¹
- Chocolate milk is sometimes better tolerated by those with lactose intolerance than unflavored milk.⁴

Health and nutrition experts recommend lactose-free milk first

- According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, if a person wants to consider milk alternatives because of lactose intolerance, the most reliable and easiest way to derive the health benefits associated with milk and milk product consumption is to choose alternatives within the milk food group, such as yogurt or lactose-free milk, or to consume the enzyme lactase prior to the consumption of milk products.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has stated that elimination of milk and other dairy products is not usually necessary and points to evidence that avoidance of dairy products may lead to inadequate calcium intake and consequent suboptimal bone mineralization.⁵

Avoiding milk and dairy products may increase the risk for nutrient deficiencies and several chronic diseases

- Reducing consumption of dairy foods due to concerns about lactose intolerance can result in a lower intake of milk's nutrients, especially calcium, which may increase the risk of several chronic diseases.⁵ This is of particular concern for population groups whose intakes of several nutrients already fall below recommended levels.
- Intake of dairy products is important for children with lactose intolerance, since avoiding milk and dairy products to control symptoms can result in low calcium intake.⁶

References

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