

The Facts About Milk

Many people are reluctant to give up milk as it has always been promoted as a wholesome, healthy drink, rich in calcium for strong bones. This is the milk myth and what those profiting from the sales of dairy products would like you to believe. Dairy products are absolutely not essential for optimum fitness.

The Milk Myth

A substantial body of scientific evidence shows the link between bone health and dairy product consumption is weak. In fact to build strong bones and healthy bodies, children need exercise, sunshine, and a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.¹ There is no nutritional requirement for dairy products, in fact there are serious problems that can result from the proteins, sugar and fat in milk products. Milk contains significant amounts of saturated fat, as well as cholesterol, which can lead to obesity and contribute to heart disease and certain forms of cancer. Although we do need a certain amount of fat in our diets, saturated fat is the wrong kind, and cow's milk is low in the good essential fatty acids that we do need.

Calcium And Osteoporosis

Most of our body's calcium is in our bones. The small amount in our bloodstream plays an important role in functions such as muscle contraction and maintenance of the heartbeat. Bloodstream calcium is constantly being lost through urine, sweat and faeces. Replacement comes from the bones, which depend on fresh supplies from the food we eat. Diets rich in animal protein, such as that found in cow's milk, make the blood more acidic. The body tries to neutralise this by drawing calcium from the bones into the bloodstream, which is filtered through the kidneys and lost through urine. The more dairy products consumed, the more calcium the body needs to balance the losses. Contrary to what most people think – because it is what they are told by the dairy industry – eating excessive amounts of dairy products can therefore contribute to weak bones and osteoporosis. Countries whose populations eat low-protein diets (i.e a low level of dairy products) have lower rates of osteoporosis and hip fractures.²

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose is a type of sugar found in milk. About 75% of the world's population is lactose intolerant – unable to digest lactose – causing gastrointestinal symptoms of flatulence, bloating, cramps and diarrhoea in some individuals. This is due to a shortage of enzymes that break down the lactose into its simpler forms – glucose and galactose. Studies have shown that lactose intolerance is

common among those whose ancestry is African, Asian, Native American, Arab, Jewish, Hispanic, Italian, or Greek. As we age, many of us lose the active enzymes. But people suffering from digestive problems often overlook dairy products as the cause of their ills, because milk has for so long been touted as a healthy, wholesome, natural product.

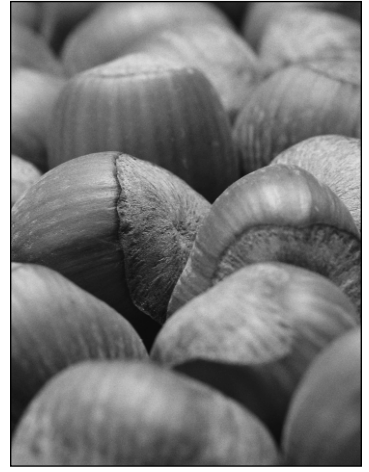
Allergies

Consuming dairy products has also been linked to a number of allergies such as asthma, eczema and wheezing, especially in childhood. Naturally, the best beverage for infants and small toddlers is mother's breast milk. Even after the first year, food allergies to milk and milk products are common. Many children and teens with irritable bowel syndrome, autism, asthma, and allergies improve when they stop drinking cow's milk.

Colic

One out of every five babies suffers from colic. Pediatricians have learnt that cow's milk consumption is often the reason. Even breastfeeding mothers can have colicky babies if the mothers are consuming cow's milk, as the cow's antibodies are passed through the mother's bloodstream into her breastmilk.³





Research has shown that children fed on formula (dairy) milk are more likely to become obese than breastfed children. What's more, formula-fed children are at greater risk from respiratory disease, diabetes, allergies, diarrhoea and gastroenteritis. It's been estimated that if all children were breastfed the NHS would save around £35 million each year in treating infant gastroenteritis alone. How much more money – and heartache – would be saved treating adults for cardiac problems caused by obesity and high blood pressure as well?'

National Childbirth Trust, February 2001.

Iron Deficiency

Cow's milk is very low in iron. Dairy-rich diets can lead to iron deficiency⁴ because cow's milk is poorly absorbed into the body and actually inhibits iron absorption from other foods.

Diabetes

Studies in various countries have shown a strong link between the use of dairy products and the incidence of insulin-dependent diabetes.⁵ In 1992 researchers⁶ found that a specific dairy protein sparks an auto-immune reaction, which is believed to be what destroys the insulin producing cells of the pancreas.

Crohn's Disease

Research has linked the intestinal disorder Crohn's disease – that causes fever, diarrhoea and pain after eating – with Johne's disease in dairy cows. The bacterium in cows interferes with their digestion, lowers milk production, and eventually kills those infected. This same bacterium has been found in the gut of humans suffering from Crohn's disease.

Dairy Products And The Link To Cancer

Galactose has been implicated in ovarian cancer.⁷ Galactose needs to be broken down further by enzymes and when dairy product consumption exceeds the enzymes' capacity to break down galactose, it can build up in the blood and may affect a woman's ovaries. Breast and prostate cancers have also been linked to consumption of

dairy products, related to increases in insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1).⁸ IGF-1 is a growth hormone that is identical in cows and humans. In cattle, It helps calves develop rapidly into stocky adult animals. It is a powerful hormone that stimulates the growth of malignant cells and has been identified as a key factor in the growth of human cancer. People drinking milk have increased levels of IGF-1 in their bodies.

Plant Sources Of Calcium

On a balanced vegan diet there is no risk of calcium or protein deficiency. Good sources of calcium include; baked beans, nuts, seeds, green leafy vegetables including kale, broccoli and brussel sprouts, tofu, dried fruit and fortified soya milks such as Alpro/Provamil, Plamil and Granovita (supermarkets also sell their own brands) and breakfast cereals. To ensure your diet doesn't contain too much protein, replace animal protein with tofu, rice, wholegrains, vegetables, peas, beans and lentils.

References

1. Amy Joy Lanou, Susan E. Berkow, and Neal D. Barnard. Calcium, Dairy Products, and Bone Health in Children and Young Adults: A Reevaluation of the Evidence. *Pediatrics*, 2005; 115: 736 - 743.
2. Hegsted DM. Calcium and osteoporosis. *J Nutr* 1986; 116: 2316-9.
3. Clyne P. S, Kulczycki A. Human breast milk contains bovine IgG. Relationship to infant colic? *Pediatrics* 1991; 87 (4): 439-44.
4. Pennington JAT. *Bowes and Churches food values of portions commonly used*, 17th ed. New York: Lippincott, 1998.
5. Scott FW. Cow milk and insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus: is there a relationship? *Am J Clin Nutr* 1990; 51: 489-91.
6. Karjalainen J, Martin JM, Knip M, et al. A bovine albumin peptide as a possible trigger of insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. *N Engl J Med* 1992; 327: 302-7.
7. Cramer DW, Willett WC, Bell DA, et al. Galactose consumption and metabolism in relation to the risk of ovarian cancer. *Lancet* 1989; 2: 66-71.
8. Outwater JL, Nicholson A, Barnard N. Dairy products and breast cancer: the IGF-1, estrogen, and bGH hypothesis 1997; 48: 453-61.