



# BLEND Food Group Focus

## Milk

“Get Your Calcium-Rich Foods”

### Importance of Milk

Milk and milk products contain nutrients that are vital for health and maintenance of your body. Foods from the milk group provide **calcium, vitamin D, phosphorus, potassium, and protein.**

- **Calcium** forms bones and teeth and helps keep them strong.
- **Vitamin D** helps the body use calcium.
- **Phosphorus** also helps build bones and teeth.
- **Potassium** helps regulate fluid and mineral balance and is needed for muscle contractions and transmission of nerve impulses. Potassium also helps regulate blood pressure.
- **Protein** helps build and repair muscle tissue. Protein also serves as a source of energy during exercise and helps you resist disease.

### What Foods Are In the Milk Group?

All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of this food group. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content are part of the group, while foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not. The USDA’s recommends that you choose fat-free or low-fat choices from the milk group everyday. Low-fat and fat-free milk are good choices because either option provides the calcium needed without extra amounts of fat or calories. Some commonly eaten choices in the milk group are listed below.

Milk Choices		
<b>Milk*</b> All fluid milk: <i>fat-free (skim)</i> <i>low fat (1%)</i> <i>reduced fat (2%)</i> <i>whole milk</i> Flavored milks: <i>chocolate</i> <i>strawberry</i> Lactose reduced milks Lactose-free milks	<b>Milk-Based Desserts*</b> Puddings made with milk Ice milk Frozen yogurt Ice cream <b>Yogurt*</b> All yogurt: <i>fat-free</i> <i>low fat</i> <i>reduced fat</i> <i>whole milk yogurt</i>	<b>Cheese*</b> Hard natural cheeses: <i>cheddar</i> <i>mozzarella</i> <i>Swiss</i> <i>parmesan</i> Soft cheeses: <i>ricotta</i> <i>cottage cheese</i> Processed cheeses: <i>American</i>

#### Lactose Intolerance

The most reliable way to get the health benefits of milk if you are lactose intolerant is to choose lactose-free alternatives within the milk group, such as:

- Cheese, yogurt, and lactose-free milk (or consume the enzyme lactase before consuming milk products).

#### Milk-Free Calcium Sources

- Calcium fortified juices, cereals, breads, soy beverages, or rice beverages.
- Canned fish (sardines, salmon with bones).
- Soybeans and other soy products (soy-based beverages, soy yogurt, tempeh).
- Some dried beans (navy beans, white beans).
- Some leafy greens (collard and turnip greens, kale, bok choy).

### Why Is It Important to Make Fat-free or Low-fat Choices from the Milk Group?

- Choosing foods from the milk group that are high in saturated fats and cholesterol can have health implications.
- Diets high in saturated fats raise “bad” cholesterol levels in the blood. The “bad” cholesterol is called LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol. High LDL cholesterol, in turn, increases the risk for coronary heart disease.
- Many cheeses, whole milk, and products made from them are high in saturated fat.
- To help keep blood cholesterol levels healthy, limit the amount of high-fat milk product you eat.
- In addition, a high intake of fats makes it difficult to avoid consuming more calories than are needed.
- Kids that are two years and older can drink low-fat and fat-free milk. They provide the same amount of calcium and vitamin D as whole milk or 2% milk, but less saturated fat and calories.

## USDA MyPyramid Recommendations for Milk

The amount of food you need to eat from the Milk Group depends on age. Recommended daily amounts are shown in the chart below.

Age		Daily Recommendation*
		Total Daily
Children	2 to 3 years	2 cups
	4 to 8 years	2 cups
Girls	9 to 13 years	3 cups
	14 to 18 years	3 cups
Boys	9 to 13 years	3 cups
	14 to 18 years	3 cups
Women	19 to 30 years	3 cups
	31 to 50 years	3 cups
	51+ years	3 cups
Men	19 to 30 years	3 cups
	31 to 50 years	3 cups
	51+ years	3 cups

\*Amounts are for those who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity beyond normal daily activities. Visit [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) for more information.

### What Counts As a Cup of Milk?

The following lists specific amounts that count as 1 cup in the milk group towards your daily recommended intake:

- ½ cup cottage cheese is equivalent to ¼ cup milk
- 1 scoop ice cream is equivalent to 1/3 cup milk
- 1½ cups of ice cream = 1 cup
- 1 slice of processed cheese is equivalent to 1/3 cup milk
- 1 snack size container (4 oz) of yogurt = ½ cup
- 1/3 cup of shredded cheese = 1 cup
- 1 regular container (8 oz) of yogurt = 1 cup

To learn more about the **Milk Group**, visit the USDA's MyPyramid website at: [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). The food pyramid can help you determine what you need and track your progress toward nutrition goals. Your personalized plan helps you choose the foods your body needs most.

### Safety First!

- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or any products made from unpasteurized milk. It contains bacteria that could cause food-borne illness.
- Keep raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods separate.
- Refrigerate perishable food quickly and defrost foods in refrigerator.

### Tips to Help You Consume More Milk!

- **Include** milk as a beverage at meals. Choose fat-free or low-fat milk.
- **Switch** gradually from whole milk to fat-free milk, to lower saturated fat and calories.
- **Add** fat-free or low-fat milk instead of water to oatmeal and hot cereals.
- **Eat** fat-free or low-fat yogurt as a snack.
- **Make** a dip for fruits or vegetables from yogurt.
- **Treat** yourself to fruit-yogurt smoothies in the blender.
- **Make** pudding with fat-free or low-fat milk.
- **Cut up** fruit and top with flavored yogurt.
- **Top** a baked potato with fat-free or low-fat yogurt.