

Got the Message on Low-Fat Milk Yet?

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June is National Dairy Month and the perfect time for me to get on my soapbox and shout, “Drink or eat fat-free or low fat (1%) milk and milk foods!” I have to remind myself to be diplomatic. However; if you want to make one big change to improve the quality of your diet, moving from whole milk and milk products to fat-free or low fat ones is a relatively painless change to make. I remind you, you are not having a root canal or giving birth to a child; simply making a change that will reduce the amount of calories and saturated fat you consume as you drink and/or eat the recommended 3 cups (for ages 2-8, it's 2 cups) of nutrient dense dairy foods each day.

Eating the daily recommended amounts of fat-free or low fat milk and milk products is very important as these foods contribute many necessary nutrients for growth and repair. Often these foods are fortified with vitamin D; a nutrient of concern according the recently released *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

(<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm>) Adequate amounts of vitamin D are important for good health.

Extremely low levels of vitamin D may result in rickets in children and a softening of bones (osteomalacia) in adults. Bones can also lose density, which leads to fragile bones or osteoporosis. Recommended amounts of vitamin D can also help reduce the risk of bone fractures. Vitamin D works to help the body use the calcium and phosphorus we eat to make our bones and teeth stronger.

In recent years many health professionals had suspected that the majority of Americans were grossly deficient in vitamin D; but recent data indicate as many as 80% of Americans have adequate vitamin D blood levels. During the time before the release of the new information, many people began to take vitamin D dietary supplements. Too much vitamin D (more than 4000 IU for those over nine years of age) can be dangerous, as vitamin D is a fat soluble nutrient the body stores. Large quantities can lead not only to nausea and mood changes but to organ damage. Before taking a supplement, be sure to check with your health professional.

The research accompanying the Dietary Guidelines released in November 2010 did reveal that Americans need more vitamin D than we previously thought. Most of us need 600 International Units (IU) of vitamin D each day. Adults, ages 71 and older, need 800 IU of the vitamin. We get the vitamin from three different sources, food, supplements and sunlight.

Eggs, sardines and salmon contain vitamin D. Orange juice and some breakfast cereals are fortified with vitamin D. However; in the United States, we consume most of our dietary vitamin D when we drink or eat fluid milks and some yogurts that are also fortified with the vitamin. If you do not get enough vitamin D from the foods you eat or do not spend much time in the sun, then supplements can help.

For most of us living in the South, we get at least some of our vitamin D from exposure to sunlight. For older persons, those with dark skin, people who are obese or have liver or kidney disease and people who do not get enough direct exposure to the sun may be at risk for a vitamin D deficiency. If you think you may be lacking in the necessary nutrient ask your physician to perform the necessary blood work to determine if you need a supplement.

Two new publications from UF/IFAS Extension, *Facts about Vitamin D*, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/FY/FY20700.pdf> and *Shopping for Health: Vitamin D¹*, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/FS/FS16300.pdf> details the new recommendations and other important information about vitamin D.

Don't pass up the opportunity to celebrate National Dairy Month with your family by including fortified (check

the Nutrition Facts label) fat-free or low fat dairy foods every day. And, Flag Day is a few days away so honor both celebrations with any version of a Red, White and Blue Sundae; it's a perfect breakfast, lunch, snack, dessert or party food!

Red, White & Blue Sundae

Fat-free or low fat fortified plain or vanilla yogurt

1 or more red fruit (strawberries, raspberries, red grapes)

1 or more blue fruit (blueberries, blackberries, blue grapes)

Layer all 3 ingredients in a clear, festive container. Top with a sprinkle of crunch; granola or chopped nuts and a dash of cinnamon.

If you have a question, write to Jo Shuford-Law, Extension Agent Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Florida/IFAS Extension--Leon County, 615 Paul Russell Road, Tallahassee, FL 32301-7099; or call the Extension Office 606-5203, between 8 a.m. to noon or 1 to 5 p.m. weekdays.

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