

# DAIRY FOOD MYTHS



Dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yoghurt are an excellent source of calcium; very few other foods in the Australian diet contain as much of this important nutrient. They are also a good source of other key nutrients including protein, iodine, riboflavin and vitamin B12.

Dairy foods have long been known for their bone health benefits but research has shown that milk, cheese and yoghurt can also protect us against heart disease and stroke, reduce our risk of high blood pressure and some cancers and may reduce our risk of type 2 diabetes.

Use the table below to see how many serves of dairy foods adults and children need each day.

### Minimum recommended number of serves from the dairy food group

	Age (years)	No. of serves per day
Men	19–70	2 ½
	70+	3 ½
Women	19–50	2 ½
	50+	4
	Pregnant or breast feeding	2 ½
Boys	2–3	1 ½
	4–8	2
	9–11	2 ½
	12–18	3 ½
Girls	2–3	1 ½
	4–8	1 ½
	9–11	3
	12–18	3 ½

*Adapted from: 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. The dairy food group includes milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives.\**

## ONE SERVE OF DAIRY IS EQUIVALENT TO:



\*Alternatives include: 250ml soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml.

Many favourite foods, including dairy foods, attract unwarranted criticism due to outdated information and long held myths. The information provided in this fact sheet outlines the evidence-based facts behind many of the myths associated with eating dairy foods.

### MYTH "I have to cut back on dairy to lose weight"

#### FACTS

- Consumption of three to four daily serves of dairy foods, such as milk, cheese and yoghurt, as part of a balanced diet is not linked to weight gain.
- For people looking to lose weight, including three to four serves of milk, cheese and yoghurt in a reduced-kilojoule diet can actually help accelerate weight and fat loss and shrink waist lines.

## MYTH "I have lactose intolerance so avoid dairy"

### FACTS

- People with lactose intolerance do not need to avoid dairy foods. According to the Australian Dietary Guidelines, up to 250ml of milk may be well tolerated if it is consumed with other foods or throughout the day.
- Cheese contains little lactose and the lactose in yoghurt is partially broken down, so should be well tolerated. Low-lactose and lactose-free milks and yoghurts are also available.

## MYTH "Only reduced-fat milk is healthy"

### FACTS

- All milk (regular-fat and reduced-fat) is considered to be a nutritious food. Both regular-fat and reduced-fat milks are included in the dairy food group – one of the five food groups that the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend people consume every day.
- The health benefits associated with consuming dairy foods are linked to all milk.
- Reduced-fat milk is not suitable as a drink for children below 2 years of age due to the lower energy content. Similarly, regular-fat milk may be more appropriate for adults over the age of 70 years, due to the slightly higher energy content.

## MYTH "If you take calcium tablets you don't need milk"

### FACTS

- The Australian Dietary Guidelines advise that calcium from foods may be preferable to calcium from some supplements.
- While milk is an excellent source of calcium, it also provides many other essential nutrients including potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, carbohydrate, protein, vitamin A, riboflavin, vitamin B12 and zinc.
- The health benefits linked to dairy foods are thought to be due to the combination of nutrients that are present, not just the calcium.

## MYTH "Flavoured milk is unhealthy for kids"

### FACTS

- With most children in Australia not having enough dairy foods, flavoured milk can play an important role in helping children obtain the nutrients they need.
- In the Australian Dietary Guidelines, all types of milk (plain and flavoured) are included in the dairy food group.
- Flavoured milk contains the same 10 essential nutrients as plain milk.

## MYTH "Milk contains the additive, permeate"

### FACTS

- Permeate is just a technical term for the lactose, vitamin and mineral components that have been extracted from milk using a process called ultra-filtration. There is nothing in permeate that is not naturally present in milk.
- The dairy industry has been able to use permeate to standardise milk composition and create a range of innovative dairy products.
- The use of permeate in fresh milk varies. If it is not labelled, ask the manufacturer.
- All types of milk provide the same 10 essential nutrients, regardless of permeate inclusion or exclusion.

## MYTH "We already get enough dairy foods"

### FACTS

- Most Australians do not consume the recommended amount of dairy foods each day. Around 9 out of 10 women and 7 out of 10 men need to increase their intake of foods from the dairy food group in order to meet Australian government dietary recommendations for health and well-being.
- Most Australian children from the age of 4 years onwards need to increase their intake of foods from the dairy food group to meet Australian dietary recommendations.
- As children grow, so too should their intake of foods from the dairy food group.

## MYTH "You need to cut back on cheese if you have high cholesterol levels or high blood pressure"

### FACTS

- Studies show cheese consumption does not raise 'bad' cholesterol levels – this is thought to be due to the calcium in the cheese.
- Similarly, studies show that cheese consumption is not linked to raised blood pressure.
- Cheese is a complex food and although it contains saturated fat and salt, it also contains lots of beneficial nutrients.

### DAIRY IN YOUR DIET

Excluding a major food group, from your diet without advice from a General Practitioner or Accredited Practising Dietitian can result in nutrient deficiencies and may put your health at risk. It is important to discuss any health-related issues with your medical professional.

For recipe ideas on how to include adequate serves of dairy foods in your daily eating plan visit [dairy.com.au/health](https://dairy.com.au/health)