

# Milk

*It may be our first food, but is it really good for us?*

## As mammals we are born to drink milk.

Immediately following birth, we have access to the healthiest baby food around, our mother's milk. Breast milk is the optimal form of infant nutrition. It supplies newborns with beneficial immune factors and changes composition throughout infancy in order to meet the changing needs of the infant.



**Only 10-25% of Americans are lactose intolerant.** So for most of us drinking milk and consuming dairy products is an effective and delicious way to get protein, calcium, and vitamin D. For those who are lactose intolerant or suffer occasional symptoms of lactose intolerance (stomach upset, bloating, gas), limiting portion size, trying lactose-free dairy products, or using alternative milk-like options can provide similar nutritional qualities, without digestive upset.

**Milk is an important source of calcium and vitamin D for all ages!** Not only is milk an important source, but it is also one of the few dietary sources for these nutrients. Both calcium and vitamin D are crucial for bone and dental health. Adequate intake has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of tooth loss and fractures.



**Not all milk choices are created equal.** When strolling through the super-market you are likely to encounter at least a dozen varieties of milk including: whole, skim, soy, lactose-free, chocolate and even strawberry milk! With all these choices how do we decide which milk is the right one for us?

**Read the nutrition facts!** Once cow's milk is introduced (usually after the first year of life), whole milk is best for early brain development until age 2. As we grow older and maintaining a healthy weight becomes ever more important, switching to milk choices that are lower in saturated fat (1% or skim) is most healthy. While choosing milk that is low in saturated fat is essential, don't forget to note if there is added sugar in the milk product.

**Many milk products are loaded with added and unnecessary sugars** that decrease the nutritional quality of milk. Soy milk, a common milk choice for vegans and lactose-intolerant adults, is not recommended for children because it contains phytoestrogens which possibly have adverse affects on child development. Because of the addition of high fructose corn syrup and many other high-calorie, low nutrition sweeteners in processed foods and beverages, most American consume more added sugars than recommended by the American Dietary Guidelines. Save chocolate and other sweetened, flavored milk-beverages for special treats, not everyday. Just like Grandma says, "Drink your milk! It's good for you!"