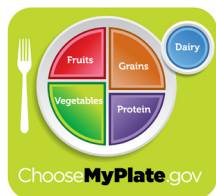


MyPlate: Dairy Group

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MyPlate, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) food guide system, helps individuals use the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans to make smart choices from every food group. MyPlate includes an interactive, online guide that provides individuals with recommended food amounts to eat, based on gender, age, and physical activity level. Personalized guides can be found at www.Choosemyplate.gov under the “SuperTracker and Other Tools” tab.

This publication describes healthy ways to incorporate proper amounts of dairy foods into the diet.

What Foods are Included in the Dairy Group?

All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of this food group. Most **Dairy Group** choices should be fat-free or low-fat. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content are part of the group. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not part of the Dairy Group. Calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage) also is part of the Dairy Group.



How Much Food from the Dairy Group is Needed Daily?

MyPlate recommendations for the Dairy Group are based on age and include a daily intake of 2 cups of dairy products for children ages 2- to 3-years-old, and 2½ cups for 4- to 8-year-olds. The recommendation for those 9 years of age and older is to consume 3 cups per day (*Table I*).

Table I. Recommended amounts of daily dairy consumption.

	<i>Daily Recommendation</i>	
Children	2-3 years old	2 cups
	4-8 years old	2½ cups
Girls	9-13 years old	3 cups
	14-18 years old	3 cups
Boys	9-13 years old	3 cups
	14-18 years old	3 cups
Women	19-30 years old	3 cups
	31-50 years old	3 cups
	51+ years old	3 cups
Men	19-30 years old	3 cups
	31-50 years old	3 cups
	51+ years old	3 cups

What Counts as a Cup in the Dairy Group?

In general, 1 cup of milk, yogurt, or soymilk (soy beverage), 1½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese can be considered as 1 cup from the Dairy Group. *Table II* lists specific amounts that count as 1 cup in the Dairy Group toward your daily recommended intake.

Table II. Amounts of dairy foods equivalent to 1 cup.

	<i>Amount That Counts as a Cup in the Dairy Group</i>	<i>Common Portions and Cup Equivalents</i>
Milk (choose fat-free or low-fat milk)	1 cup milk	
	1 half-pint container milk (8 fluid ounces)	
	½ cup evaporated milk	
Yogurt (choose fat-free or low-fat yogurt)	1 regular container (8 fluid ounces)	1 small container (6 ounces) = ¾ cup
	1 cup yogurt	1 snack size container (4 ounces) = ½ cup
Cheese (choose reduced-fat or low-fat cheeses)	1½ ounces hard cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, Parmesan)	1 slice of hard cheese is equivalent to ½ cup milk
	½ cup shredded cheese	
	2 ounces processed cheese	1 slice of processed cheese is equivalent to ⅓ cup milk
	½ cup ricotta cheese	
	2 cups cottage cheese	½ cup cottage cheese is equivalent to ¼ cup milk
Milk-based desserts (choose fat-free or low-fat types)	1 cup pudding made with milk	
	1 cup frozen yogurt	
	1½ cups ice cream	1 scoop ice cream is equivalent to ⅓ cup milk
Soymilk (soy beverage)	1 cup calcium-fortified soymilk	
	1 half-pint container calcium-fortified soymilk	

Nutrients from Dairy Products

Dairy products provide nutrients needed for bone health and a reduced risk of osteoporosis. These nutrients include calcium, potassium, vitamin D, and protein. Milk products also can contain fat, so choose low-fat and fat-free dairy foods most often.

- **Calcium:** Calcium is used for building bones and teeth and in maintaining bone mass. Dairy products are the primary source of calcium in American diets. Diets that provide 3 cups or the equivalent of dairy products per day can improve bone mass.
- **Potassium:** Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain healthy blood pressure. Dairy products, especially yogurt, fluid milk, and soymilk (soy beverage), provide potassium.
- **Vitamin D:** This vitamin functions in the body to maintain proper levels of calcium and phosphorous, thereby helping to build and maintain bones. Milk and soymilk (soy beverage) that are fortified with vitamin D are good sources of this nutrient. Other sources include vitamin D-fortified yogurt and ready-to-eat breakfast cereals.

Health Benefits

Health benefits include improved bone health and a reduced risk of osteoporosis. Intake of dairy products is especially important during childhood and adolescence, when bone mass is being built. Intake of dairy products also is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes and with lower blood pressure in adults.

Why is it Important to Make Fat-free or Low-fat Choices from the Dairy Group?

Choosing foods from the Dairy 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 these foods you eat.

Lactose Intolerance

Some people have difficulty digesting lactose (the sugar found in milk) and may experience nausea, bloating, cramping, and runny stools. Their bodies do not produce enough of an enzyme to break down lactose so that it can be absorbed.

Tips for Making Wise Choices from the Dairy Group

- Include milk or calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage) as a beverage at meals. Choose fat-free or low-fat milk.
- If you usually drink whole milk, switch gradually to fat-free milk, to lower saturated fat and calories. Try reduced fat (2%), then low-fat (1%), and finally fat-free (skim).
- If you drink cappuccinos or lattes, ask for them with fat-free (skim) milk.
- Add fat-free or low-fat milk instead of water to oatmeal and hot cereals.
- Use fat-free or low-fat milk when making condensed cream soups (such as cream of tomato).
- Have fat-free or low-fat yogurt as a snack.
- Make a dip for fruits or vegetables from yogurt.
- Make fruit-yogurt smoothies in the blender.
- For dessert, make chocolate or butterscotch pudding with fat-free or low-fat milk.
- Top cut-up fruit with flavored yogurt for a quick dessert.
- Top casseroles, soups, stews, or vegetables with shredded reduced-fat or low-fat cheese.
- Top a baked potato with fat-free or low-fat yogurt.

These people can sometimes handle small amounts of milk, yogurt, or aged cheese in a meal with other foods.

- For lactose-intolerant individuals, choose alternatives such as lactose-free yogurt or milk, coconut or almond milk, or milk prepared with lactase enzyme.
- People who choose to avoid all milk products, because of personal choice or health reasons, need to get their calcium from green, leafy vegetables, cooked fish with edible bones, tofu, and other calcium-fortified foods such as juices, cereals, and soy or rice beverages.
- Calcium-fortified foods and beverages such as cereals, orange juice, or rice or almond beverages may provide calcium, but may not provide the other nutrients found in dairy products.

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Resources

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* (7th ed.). <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm>.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Food Groups – Dairy. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/dairy.html>

National Dairy Council. <http://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/Pages/Home.aspx>

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