

# Nutrient-rich dairy

In many households women are in charge of selecting the foods their families eat. This is a great responsibility because it means women determine how healthy the diets of our families are. The aim is to choose foods that are healthy and contain many nutrients.

**These foods are referred to as nutrient-rich foods.**

**W**hen we struggle to balance our budgets, it makes sense to buy foods that are as nutrient-rich as possible, providing value for your money. Dairy products, which include milk, yoghurt, maas, cottage cheese and other types of cheese, are among the most nutrient-rich foods available.<sup>1</sup>

The South African Food-Based Dietary Guideline encourages everybody to 'have milk, maas or yoghurt every day'.<sup>2</sup> Ideally, all adults and children should have three servings of dairy a day.<sup>1</sup>

## Just how nutrient-rich is dairy?

Let's use 2% milk as an example. A 250 ml serving (1 cup) will supply between 10% and 30% of the recommended daily allowance (RDA)\* values for protein, vitamin B2, vitamin B12, calcium, phosphorus and zinc.<sup>3</sup> So, three servings of dairy a day, be it milk, cheese or yoghurt, will provide between 30% and 90% of an adult's needs of these specific nutrients.

Worldwide nutritionists<sup>4,5</sup> encourage the combination of milk (fresh or fermented, liquid or powder) with staple foods such as maize or rice, which are primary energy sources, to 'close the gap between current nutrient intakes and recommendations'.<sup>4</sup> The calcium in dairy promotes healthy bones and teeth in children and teenagers and may reduce the risk of developing osteoporosis later in life.<sup>1</sup>

## Other benefits of dairy

In addition to the high nutrient content and the ability to help realise dietary goals and improve bone status, consumption of dairy foods is also linked to lower blood pressure, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and a lower incidence of type 2 diabetes.<sup>4</sup>

## Misconceptions

The public, and women in particular, tend to regard dairy products as a fattening indulgence. Often milk and dairy products are the first to be banned in self-formulated slimming regimens. Given the link between three servings of low-fat dairy a day and improved weight loss, slimmers should be adding dairy to their diets instead of discarding it. The calcium in dairy has been shown to assist in weight loss when it forms part of an energy-controlled diet. Keep in mind that full-cream, low-fat and fat-free (skimmed) milk typically contain only 3.4%, 1.5 – 2% and < 0.5% fat respectively.<sup>3</sup>

## Versatile and tasty

With the wide range of dairy products on the market – from full-cream to fat-free milk, yoghurt and cheese options – dairy can suit all ages and lifestyles. Low-fat or fat-free dairy products are ideal to be included in a slimming diet. Full-cream milk provides adults and especially growing children with essential protein and fatty acids. Yoghurt, maas and cheese are ideal healthy snacks and provide variety to the diet.

Dairy products are indeed foods for all occasions. Have three servings a day and ensure that your loved ones do too!

\*RDA is the amount of a nutrient needed to meet the requirements of nearly all (97–98%) individuals.



An Initiative of the Consumer Education Project of Milk SA

For more information visit

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### References

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