



MEDIA RELEASE

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Consumer Education Project of Milk SA



Dairy-atics: Cheers to **STRONG BONES** and Happy Hips

Ageing: a natural and inevitable part of the journey through life. The benefit of medical advances in technology means that the world is getting older and living longer. Globally, between now and 2050, estimates are that the number of people aged 60 years and older will rise from 900 million to 2 billion. Closer to home, South African men and women, respectively, have a life expectancy of 73 and 78 years old.




Just like a good retirement plan requires financial thought and planning, so too should we have a plan of action as we focus on our long-term health and nutrition. This is because, as we age, a natural breakdown in the micro-architecture of the bones increases the risk of fragile bones and fractures, as well as a loss of muscle affecting independent movement. Let's unravel how good nutrition choices can help keep our bones strong and muscle mass in tip-top shape.

A bone-ified food

No nutrient gets as much attention for bone health and support as calcium. Calcium is a mineral that helps to maintain the structural integrity of our bones (and teeth, too). Eating enough calcium supports the skeleton from childhood through to our teen years. Later in life, calcium helps prevent bone loss linked to the age-related condition called osteoporosis. Bone health is particularly a concern in women, thanks to changes in hormone levels after menopause. Added to this, calcium is essential for other functions of the body like muscle contraction, blood clotting, and the transmission between nerves.

"As we get older, our calcium needs increase, yet we know that the calcium intake in older South Africans is low. Dairy products are good food sources of bone-building calcium, and in an easy-to-absorb and cost-effective form. This is why the dietary guidelines for the elderly recommend that South Africans consume dairy foods – like milk, maas, yoghurt and cheese – as part of a healthy and balanced diet", says registered dietitian consulting to Rediscover Dairy, Monique Piderit.






In 2021, a study in Australia followed over 7 000 elderly residents in thirty age-care facilities. The residents were offered up higher intakes of dairy over a two-year period. Results showed an almost 50% decreased risk of hip fracture, 33% decreased risk for all fractures, and 11% decreased risk for falls. These results were impressive considering that one in three people with hip fracture die within a year of sustaining their injury. Malnutrition risks plummeted in these residents, too.

Power up the protein

Alongside osteoporosis, another health concern as the years tick by is sarcopenia – an age-related loss of muscle mass and strength. Our food choices can effectively mitigate the impact of sarcopenia, ensuring that seniors lead active and fulfilling lives as they age. Protein is a muscle fuel that provides the building blocks for muscles helping to keep sarcopenia at bay. Protein also helps support a healthy immune system. For this reason, healthcare practitioners encourage that the elderly focus on eating enough protein to help maintain their independence, mobility, and overall quality of life.



"Dairy products are a source of good quality protein, alongside lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs, plant-based sources such as legumes and soy. It is also important that we encourage activity, for both bone strength and muscle mass. In fact, being active is another food-based guideline encouraged by the Department of Health to support our health as we age", says Piderit.

The delight of the dairy-atic diet

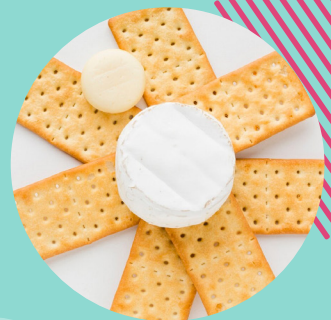
Bone health and muscle strength remain important through all phases of ageing. Eating difficulties related to sensory changes, dry mouths, food and medication interactions, ill-fitting dentures, the dependence of the elderly on caregivers for food buying and preparation, coupled with limited budget for food, all play a role in the nutrition intake of the elderly that can quickly lead to malnutrition and wasting.

Rediscover Dairy shares some small, gradual changes and variety in food choices that can significantly contribute to improved overall nutrition and well-being for the elderly:



A glass or two of milk a day can make all the difference. A dry mouth is a common symptom in ageing, so offering up more nutrient-filled liquids like milk is well-received by parched lips. Keep it simple and enjoy plain, or blend with fruit like bananas, strawberries, or mango for a more complete meal. For extra excitement on the tastebuds, make a milky iced coffee or spiced latte with cinnamon, cardamom, and ginger.

Loss of appetite, related to medication, change of hormones, and decreased physical activity in the elderly can lead to quick and unintended weight loss and wasting in the elderly. Pump up the flavour using herbs, spices, and mouth-watering ingredients in your favourite dairy product. Think cinnamon milk at breakfast, cocoa masala-shake as an on-the-go snack, cheese topped with sweet chilli sauce and peppadews on crackers.



If appetite is low and/or too much weight loss is a concern, opt for full-cream milk or double cream yoghurt to provide essential nutrients but in a smaller volume.



Flavoured dairy may be more appetising than plain options. However, be mindful of too much added sugars and choose products with low sugar content. One flavoured milk a day if you are not overweight can do no harm (max two teaspoons of added sugar)

In the colder months, prepare creamy soups or stews using milk, maas or yoghurt. Think curries made with plain yoghurt, milk stirred into soups, or maas over hot porridge for breakfast. Warm, comforting dishes can be appetizing.

Melkkos is also an old time favourite to recall fond memories of growing up.



Between bone-building calcium and the muscle-maintenance potential of protein, it's clear that dairy offers up a double-win for bone health and prevention of muscle loss as the years pass us by. So after some activity in the garden, a game of tennis or a brisk walk with friends, let's raise a glass of milk, cheers to cheese, and say yes to yoghurt as we toast to our ageing health.



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