



MEDIA RELEASE

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Why dairy matters on our weight loss journey

The way we think about weight loss today is a clear shift away from traditional dieting. While medications like GLP-1 have become a major talking point, they are just one part of a broader change in how people are approaching their health. Today, the focus is no longer only on eating less or cutting out certain foods. Instead, there is growing emphasis on protecting strength and maintaining lean muscle while losing excess body fat.

At the same time, nutrition advice is evolving. Rather than enforced restriction, the focus is shifting towards prioritising protein and choosing foods that offer more nutritional value in every bite. These changes are grounded in a stronger scientific understanding of how the body works – from metabolism and muscle health to the role of sustainable eating patterns in long-term weight management.

Dr Monique Piderit, a Registered Dietitian says, “Whether you are following a personalised weight loss plan or using a GLP-1 medication, it’s important to shift from simply counting calories and measuring your weight to focusing on overall wellbeing. Weight loss approaches can result in the loss of not only fat, but muscle mass too. This matters because a loss of strength can impact day-to-day health and longevity.

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“Emerging research shows that unintended muscle loss is commonly associated with GLP-1 treatments. That’s one of the reasons for a renewed focus on including dairy every day as part of a balanced weight management plan. In addition to contributing high-quality protein, milk, yoghurt and maas contain what is known as the ‘dairy matrix’ - a unique combination of nutrients, including calcium, that support long-term health.”



Muscle matters



Research shows that when you're losing weight using GLP-1 therapy, your protein needs are higher than usual. Experts recommend around 1.2 to 1.5 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight each day to help protect muscle. For many people, that can be difficult to achieve when appetite is reduced due to medication.



Maretha Vermaak, Registered Dietitian at Rediscover Dairy says, "This is where dairy can make a real difference. Dairy is a complete protein, providing all the essential amino acids your body needs, including leucine, which plays a key role in building and maintaining muscle. Milk also contains two types of protein that work in different ways. Whey is digested quickly and supports muscle repair, while casein digests more slowly, helping to protect muscle over a longer period. This means even simple choices, like a glass of milk in the evening, can help support muscle maintenance.

"In addition, dairy helps you feel fuller for longer and supports more stable blood sugar levels. When you're eating less or not feeling as hungry, this combination of protein, satiety and steady energy becomes especially valuable."



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Managing nausea and other GLP-1 side effects

GLP-1 medications often cause a range of gut side effects such as nausea, vomiting, constipation, and early fullness. Fermented dairy products including yoghurt and maas, can help support gut health due to their live cultures and bioactive compounds. Maretha points out, “When nauseous, cold foods such as yoghurt and maas tend to be tolerated better. Their smooth texture and mild acidity make them easier to consume when appetite is low or taste changes. For many people on GLP-1 therapy, yoghurt becomes a simple, manageable option that provides both protein and gut-supporting benefits.”



How to have a healthy day with dairy



For those on a weight loss journey, whether you're using GLP-1 therapy or not, here is Dr Piderit's framework for including dairy in controlled amounts throughout the day:



▶ **Breakfast** – Berrylicious Smoothie - Start the day in a refreshing way and with a wake-up protein punch with 200g Greek-style yoghurt (12g protein) blended with your favourite fresh berries.



▶ **Mid-morning snack** – Fuel up with 30g lean biltong slices (15g protein) paired with a handful of dried raisins – it's protein-packed with a touch of natural sweetness.

▶ **Lunch** – Cheesy Eggs – Enjoy a satisfying, muscle-supporting but light meal that's quick to prepare: 2 scrambled eggs (14g protein) with 30g grated cheese (7g protein) and diced vegetables such as sweet peppers or baby marrows.



▶ **Afternoon snack** – Beat the after-lunch slump with a snack that is nutrient-dense: 200ml plain yoghurt (8g protein) used as a dip for finger vegetables such as baby corn, cucumber sticks, or baby carrots.

▶ **Dinner** – Tuna and Brown Rice Salad – Relax after work with a balanced and satisfying, protein-rich dinner - 1 tin tuna (40g protein) mixed with 2 tablespoons plain yoghurt (1.5g), 1/2 cup cooked brown rice, diced red onion and cucumber.



▶ **Bedtime snack** – Cinnamon Milk – As part of your bedtime routine include a comforting warm drink that also supports your body's overnight muscle maintenance: 250ml hot milk with a dash of cinnamon (8g protein).





For a person weighing 80kg, your daily protein intake will be between 96 and 120g protein which is $\approx 1.4\text{g/kg}$ - meeting the requirements for people using GLP-1 therapy.

Maretha concludes, “GLP-1 medications are powerful tools for weight loss, but without proper nutritional support, rapid weight loss can lead to muscle loss, nutrient deficiencies, and long-term metabolic challenges. Dairy is so versatile and can easily be part of many kinds of small meals and snacks. It offers unequalled nutrient density, helping you to not just meet your protein needs, but also calcium and other essential vitamins and minerals that need to be part of your weight loss eating plan to protect your health.”



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