



## For now, stick with low- or nonfat dairy

**I tend to drink 1 percent or fat-free milk, but recently I've heard that full-fat dairy might help with weight loss. Should I switch?**

There's some interesting science going on these days regarding dairy fat. For example, a review of 16 studies, published last year in the *European Journal of Nutrition*, supported the view that high-fat dairy foods don't contribute to obesity. And it's not hard to find other research with similar findings.

Despite results from these studies, most nutrition professionals believe the verdict is still out on whether or not dairy fat can help you manage your weight. Until the science is settled, they recommend sticking to the advice offered in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans: "Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1 percent) milk."

Why? It all goes back to saturated fats. Diets high in saturated fats tend to raise the low-density lipoproteins, or "bad" cholesterol, in your blood, and that increases the risk for coronary heart disease. Whole milk, many types of cheese and other full-fat dairy products are high in saturated fat.

Calories also count: A cup of whole milk has 145 calories, while a cup of fat-free milk has just 90 calories. An ounce of regular cheddar cheese has 115 calories, while an ounce of cheddar cheese made from 2 percent milk has just 80 calories. Just look at Nutrition Facts labels and it's clear

that choosing low-fat or nonfat dairy can help keep you from consuming more calories than you need.

Why eat dairy at all? Nutrition experts say it's a nutrient-packed food — an excellent source of calcium, vitamin D and riboflavin. Dairy foods also contain protein, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and vitamins A and B12.

Health benefits linked to dairy products include better bone health, which could reduce the risk of osteoporosis, as well as a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Dairy consumption may also improve blood pressure, especially because of the potassium in milk and yogurt.

The Dietary Guidelines recommend 3 cups of milk a day, or the equivalent of other dairy products, for everyone 9 years and older. A "cup" of dairy includes:

- 8 ounces of yogurt.
- 1.5 ounces of hard cheese.
- 1/3 cup of shredded cheese.
- 2 ounces of processed cheese.
- 2 cups of cottage cheese.

For more information about including dairy foods in your diet, see [choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/dairy.html](http://choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/dairy.html).

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*



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### Editor:

This column was reviewed by Carolyn Gunther, assistant professor and community nutrition education specialist for Ohio State University Extension, the outreach arm of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

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