

## Deciphering Dairy

Older adults are looking for ways to balance the demands of life while maintaining healthy eating. Most older adults fall short of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendation of 3 servings of dairy per day. Dairy provides nutrient dense foods and beverages to meet many of those needs as we age. Studies has shown that routine consumption of dairy helps with high blood pressure, bone, gut, and heart health.

Milk, which is made into cheese, yogurt, ice cream, sour cream etc contain 13 essential nutrients like high quality protein, calcium, vitamin D and potassium.

These nutrients help our bodies function properly:

- Protein helps build and repair muscle tissues
- Calcium and vitamin D sustain strong bones and teeth
- Protein, zinc, selenium, vitamins A and D support a healthy immune system
- Potassium helps maintain a healthy blood pressure and support heart health.

Milk also contains B vitamins to help convert carbohydrates, fat, and protein into fuel:

- Vitamin B-12
- Riboflavin (B2)
- Pantothenic acid (B5)
- Niacin (B3)

### **Milk/Dairy Label Questions and Facts:**

**Does milk have added sugar?** White milk does not; the sugar in milk comes naturally from lactose. An 8-ounce serving of milk contains 12 grams of natural sugar- same amount you would find in a small banana. Chocolate and other flavored milks may contain added sugar.

**What is carrageenan?** Carrageenan is a seaweed extract that can be used to thicken foods, such as chocolate milk, yogurt, and ice cream.

**What do milk percentages mean?** 1% and 2% milk refer to the amount of fat in the milk by weight. Whole milk, which is the closest to what would be coming from the cow, is about 3.5% fat. Fat-free or skim milk contains very little fat, less than 0.2%.

**Why is vitamin D added to milk?** Has been added since 1922 with the discovery that found adding vitamin D to calcium rich milk could help build and maintain bones

**What is ultra-high temperature milk?** UHT milk is real milk that has been ultra-pasteurized- heated at or above 280 degrees for at least 2 second and packages in a way to be shelf stable for several months.

**What are probiotics, (“contain live and active cultures”)?** Probiotics are the good bacteria in the gut which help support a healthy gut microbiome. Some positive effects of probiotics include fighting off bad bacteria, improving digestion and supporting the immune system.

**What is Lactose Free?** Dairy products where the milk sugar, lactose, has been eliminated or lessened for those that struggle to have enough of the digestive enzyme lactase.

References: Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025, National Dairy Council- [USDairy.com](http://USDairy.com)  
And [fdc.nal.usda.gov](http://fdc.nal.usda.gov)

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