

Opportunities To Close The Nutrition Equity Gap:

Amplifying Cultural Relevance of Dairy Foods in Tackling Health Disparities

PRESENTED BY
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April 11, 2025



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**Expert in Medical Nutrition
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Specializes in diabetes,
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Disclosures

Midwest Dairy

Wellness Warrior and I
have received an
honorarium for this
presentation

The Mother Road Dietitian, LLC.

Owner/Operator

Oklahoma Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

President, 2024-2025

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Learning Objectives

After the presentation, attendees should be able to:

1. Describe nutrition's role in health equity and the role of eating patterns in addressing nutrition disparities and chronic diseases that disproportionately affect African Americans
2. Discuss practical strategies for addressing lactose intolerance and barriers to adopting recommended servings of dairy foods within Black communities
3. Discuss opportunities to support healthcare workforce development for culturally appropriate nutrition and dietetics service delivery to support African American communities

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Code Of Ethics For The Nutrition And Dietetics Profession

Nutrition and dietetics practitioners shall:

1. Collaborate with others to reduce **health disparities and protect human rights.**
2. Promote fairness and objectivity with **fair and equitable treatment.**
3. Contribute time and expertise to activities that **promote respect, integrity, and competence of the profession.**
4. Promote the unique role of nutrition and dietetics practitioners.
5. Engage in service that benefits the community and to **enhance the public's trust in the profession.**

Code of Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession. (n.d.). www.nutrition.org/code-of-ethics. Retrieved March 11, 2025. From www.nutrition.org/code-of-ethics

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Equality Does Not Equal Equity

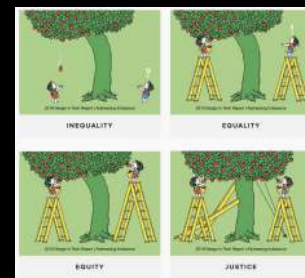


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Health Disparities Impact Black Americans At Every Life Stage

Health Disparities Impact Black American*

*compared to non-Hispanic white adults

50%	30%
more likely to have a stroke	more likely to die from heart disease
20%	25%
more likely to have diagnosed hypertension	less likely to be diagnosed with the eating disorder behaviors

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <https://www.hhs.gov/health-equity>
Gale, S. K., & Williams, M. B. (2018). The Impact of Clinical Bias on Clinical Detection of Eating Disorders, Behavior Therapy, Volume 57, Issue 4, Pages 719-725, DOI:10.1016/j.beth.2018.05.004
[https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0005-3885\(18\)30046-8](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0005-3885(18)30046-8)

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Health Disparities For Each Life Stage

Pregnancy & Lactation
Higher preterm births, lower breastfeeding rates

Infants & Toddlers
Greater mortality, feeding pattern disparities

Children & Adolescents
Dietary imbalances, under-consumption of dairy

Adults

- Discrimination, food insecurity, and other stressors
- Higher chronic disease rates; earlier onset and worse treatment outcomes
- Higher comorbidity and mortality rates

Older Adults
Higher morbidity, reduced healthcare access

Disparities | Bettsman, L.B., Davis, D.S., Systemic Inequities in Maternal, Prenatal, Socioeconomic Status, and Perinatal Discrimination Am. J. Prev. Med. 2017;32(1):63-67.
Sawicki, K., Williams, K.C., Collins, M., Kennedy, D.D. Socioeconomic status trajectories across the life course. JAMA documentation, and information services. JAMA and other journals. Psychosomaticmedicine. 2017; 79(1):122-132

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[illegible] 98% **Whole Grains** 90% **Vegetables**

 90% Dairy Food

80% **Fruit**

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Dietary Intakes Compared To Recommendations

Dietary Intakes Compared to Recommendations:
Percent of the U.S. Population Ages 1 and Older Who Are Below and/or Above Each Dietary Goal

Legend: 18-64 years (blue), 65+ years (purple)

Dietary Goal	18-64 years (%)	65+ years (%)
Total Fat	~45	~55
Saturated Fat	~40	~50
Cholesterol	~45	~55
Total Carbohydrate	~45	~55
Fiber	~45	~55
Protein	~45	~55
Calcium	~45	~55
Vitamin A	~45	~55
Vitamin C	~45	~55
Vitamin E	~45	~55
Vitamin K	~45	~55
Vitamin B1	~45	~55
Vitamin B2	~45	~55
Vitamin B3	~45	~55
Vitamin B5	~45	~55
Vitamin B6	~45	~55
Vitamin B9	~45	~55
Vitamin B12	~45	~55
Vitamin D	~45	~55
Vitamin E	~45	~55
Vitamin K	~45	~55
Vitamin B1	~45	~55
Vitamin B2	~45	~55
Vitamin B3	~45	~55
Vitamin B5	~45	~55
Vitamin B6	~45	~55
Vitamin B9	~45	~55
Vitamin B12	~45	~55
Vitamin D	~45	~55

Source: USDA, ARS, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2000. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; 2000.

USDA and USDHHS. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 2020-2025. 9th Edition.

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Dairy Consumption Across The Lifespan

9 yrs through adulthood – 3 cups

Age Group	Non-Hispanic white	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic Asian	Black	Recommended
10-14 years old	~2.8	~2.5	~2.2	~1.8	3.0
15-19 years old	~2.5	~2.2	~2.0	~1.7	3.0
20-49 years old	~2.2	~1.8	~1.5	~1.2	3.0
50+ years old	~1.8	~1.5	~1.2	~1.0	3.0

Cited: U.S. Flanders A., Flanders M., Heitsch J.M. Disparity in dairy servings: intake by ethnicity and age in NHANES 2015-2018. Current developments in nutrition. 2022. 10(1)

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Age Group	Non-Hispanic white	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic Asian	Black	Recommended
18-34 years old	3.5	3.2	2.8	2.5	2.0
35-49 years old	3.0	2.8	2.5	2.2	2.0
50-64 years	2.8	2.5	2.2	2.0	2.0
65+ years old	2.5	2.2	2.0	1.8	2.0

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Benefits Of Dairy Consumption



Birth Through 23 Months

- Adequate iron status and lower risk of iron deficiency
- Lower risk of peanut allergies and asthma



Children and Adolescents

- Favorable bone mass development
- Lower total and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol



Pregnant or Lactating

- Favorable cognitive development in the child
- Favorable folate status during pregnancy and lactation



Adults, Including Older Adults

- Lower risk of all-cause mortality
- Lower risk of cardiovascular disease
- Lower risk of cardiovascular disease mortality

U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 6th Edition. December 2020. Available at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/journal-of-the-national-medical-association) | Journal of the National Medical Association, Volume 115, Issue 2, Part 2, Pages 209-216 (April 2024)

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FACT OR FICTION?

People With Lactose Intolerance Need To Avoid All Dairy Foods

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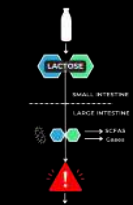
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Real Or Perceived: Lactose Intolerance (LI)

SUFFICIENT LACTASE



INSUFFICIENT LACTASE



~70-75%

of Black Americans are **lactase non-persistent** but not necessarily lactose intolerant

Shahbazi C, Friesen S, Dubeck L. Lactase Deficiency. *Journal of the National Medical Association*. 2017;109(10):109-116. doi:10.1016/j.jnma.2017.08.001. Epub 2017 Oct 10. PMID: 29031000

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Real Or Perceived: Lactose Intolerance (LI)



- Many people who are self-diagnosed or clinically diagnosed with lactose intolerance may avoid dairy.
- Ideally, everyone would get a clinical diagnosis to ensure nothing else is causing their GI distress.
- The good news is that avoidance may not be necessary once people learn which management strategies work for them.

*USDA Daily Value for the percentage of DVs are based on a 2020-2025 recommendation. In 2016, NACMMS updated the DV to 2400 mg. Based on the 2020-2025 recommendation, 10% of the DV is 240 mg. FDA rule-making is needed to update the value for the purpose of food labeling.

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LI Doesn't Have to Mean "No More Dairy"



1. USDA, MyPlate. Center for Nutrition Programs. 2020. 2. Dairy Milk. USDA. 2020. 3. Nonfat Yogurt. USDA. 2020. 4. Cheddar Cheese. USDA. 2020. 5. Swiss Cheese. USDA. 2020. 6. Ice Cream. USDA. 2020. 7. Dairy Milk. USDA. 2020.

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The Dairy Matrix: More Than The Sum Of Its Nutrients



Bioactive Component	Potential Beneficial Mechanisms
Peptides ¹	Anti-oxidant, -inflammatory, -microbial, -thrombotic, -hypertensive, Glucose control
Lipids (400+ FAs) ²⁻⁴ Milk Fat Globule Membrane	Circulating cholesterol and TGs Gut inflammation
Carbohydrates ^{2,3,5} Oligosaccharides Lactose	Prebiotic effects Mineral balance Calcium absorption

1. Nadeau et al. 2017. Food Chem. 2017;220:102-112.
2. Sathya et al. 2018. J. Dairy Sci. 2018;101:1234-1245.
3. Sathya et al. 2018. J. Dairy Sci. 2018;101:1234-1245.
4. Sathya et al. 2018. J. Dairy Sci. 2018;101:1234-1245.
5. Sathya et al. 2018. J. Dairy Sci. 2018;101:1234-1245.

FACT OR FICTION?

Dairy Isn't Culturally Relevant

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Dairy Foods Are Deeply Ingrained In Today's American Food Culture

- Dairy in America has held a special place in American culture
- Vital role in upbringing
- Educational standpoint
- Pop culture
- "American" family traditions
- Overall prominence in American foodways and casting it in a positive light



2025: Dairy Renaissance



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Dairy Foods Are An Important Part Of African American Foodways



Caribbean-Style Sorrel Smoothie with Creamy Yogurt



Southern-Style Buttermilk Cornbread



Creamy Buffalo Chicken Dip



Chipotle Grits Breakfast Bowl



Creamy Chicken Salad



Peach Yogurt Parfait

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FACT OR FICTION?

Dairy Foods Causes Inflammation

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Research Shows Dairy Foods Are Not Inflammatory

- Chronic inflammation is serious – contributes to the development of cardiometabolic disorders, like heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- A strong body of evidence suggests that dairy milk, cheese and yogurt are neutral to beneficial when it comes to inflammation.

Dairy Foods May Have A Beneficial Anti-Inflammatory Effects



Fermented Foods and Anti-Inflammatory Effects



- Fermented dairy may help reduce inflammation.
- Fermentation creates bioactives that support digestion and metabolism.
- Managing inflammation lowers chronic disease risk.

Other Anti-Inflammatory Foods

- Dairy foods
- Tomatoes
- Apples
- Berries
- Yellow and orange fruits and veggies
- Leafy greens
- Cruciferous vegetables
- Poultry
- Fish
- Nuts
- Legumes
- Coffee and tea



For Patients And Clients:

Instead of...

- Telling patients to avoid dairy completely
- Assuming all dairy causes symptoms
- Recommending plant-based alternatives without addressing nutrient gaps
- Ignoring patient concerns about symptoms
- Using generic dietary advice

Try this...

- Educating on lactose-free dairy options
- Encouraging pairing dairy with meals to aid digestion
- Highlighting dairy's unique nutrients (calcium, vitamin D, potassium) and ways to get them
- Validating their experience and discussing personalized strategies
- Sharing culturally relevant dairy options (cheese in traditional dishes, yogurt-based sauces, etc.)

For Dietitians And Healthcare Providers:

Key Messages to Improve Nutrition & Health Equity

- Discuss the importance of a medically accurate diagnosis of lactose intolerance
- Provide information on lactose management options
- Provide recommendations for the most appropriate dairy types
- Seek out additional training that focuses on the critical issues for Black populations
- Keep up to date on research
- Join or build networks of healthcare professionals
- Recommend community and government food and nutrition programs

“”

We are all humans trying to survive in a world that is constantly challenging us with hurdles to leap over. Some of us have more hurdles due to different circumstances, but the most we can do is try to take care of ourselves as best we can.

Shana Minei Spence, MS, RDN, CDN

Thank You

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Questions?