

WHOLESOME AT EVERY LEVEL: NAVIGATING DAIRY GUIDANCE

New Dietary Guidelines for Americans
& Dairy Across Life Stages

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Disclosures

Krystal Dunham developed this presentation in partnership with Midwest Dairy and has received an honorarium.

Krystal serves as a Wellness Warrior for Midwest Dairy.



About Me

- **Award-Winning Dietitian**
 - Licensed TX, OK, & AR, simplifies nutrition across media
- **Expert in Medical Nutrition Therapy**
 - Specializes in diabetes, eating disorders, and chronic health conditions
- **Diverse Perspective**
 - Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, NCAA DII soccer player, media contributor



Learning Objectives

Navigate the latest dietary guidance from the 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, by addressing the role of dairy foods, at all fat levels, in balanced diets for individuals and families

1

2

Understand the influence of the **dairy matrix** on the nutritional benefits of dairy foods

Apply literature, behavioral insights, and real-world consumption trends to discuss practical advice on the role of dairy

3

Words on Language

- Use language that is neutral, non-judgmental, and based on facts, actions and physiology/biology
- Avoid stigma including weight-stigma
- Use language that is strengths-based, respectful, inclusive, and imparts hope
- Fosters collaboration between patients and health care professionals
- Use language that is client-centered



*The guidance has evolved,
and so should we.*



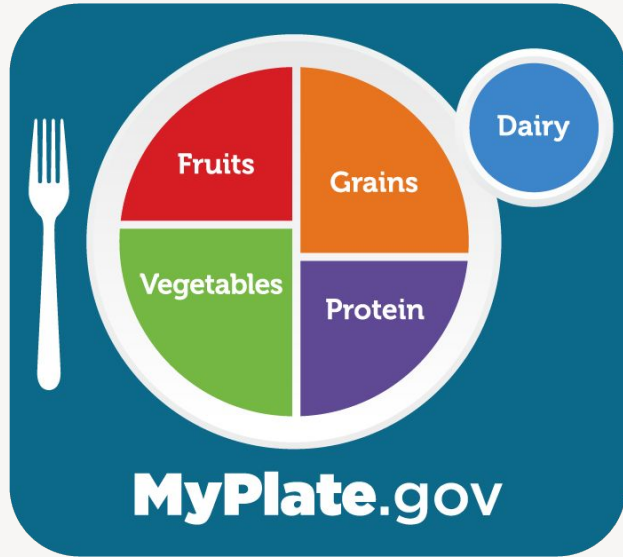




Dietitians must provide clear, evidenced-based nutrition guidance. Current evidence supports dairy, across all fat levels, can play a part of one's health journey.*

* Milk, cheese, and yogurt

From MyPlate to the New Food Pyramid



Three Anchors of the 2025-2030 DGA



High-quality, nutrient-dense protein

Consume a variety of
ASPF* and PSPF**

Recommendation
1.2–1.6 g pro/kg/d



Variety of colorful, nutrient-dense F/V

Frozen, dried, or canned
with no or very limited
added sugars

Recommendation
Vegetables: 3 servings/d
Fruits: 2 servings/d



Fiber-rich whole grains

Significantly reduce
highly processed, refined
carbohydrates

Recommendation
2–4 servings/d

* Animal Source Protein Foods

** Plant Source Protein Foods

U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030. 10th Edition. January 2026.

Dairy's Role in the New Pyramid

- Include **full-fat, with no added sugars**
- Excellent source of **protein**, healthy fats, vitamins and minerals



- Fermented foods (kefir) supports a **well-balanced microbiome & digestion**

Protein Density vs Protein Quality



Protein Density

The amount of protein relative to the total calories of the food

- $\geq 40\%$ of the calories are from protein



Protein Quality

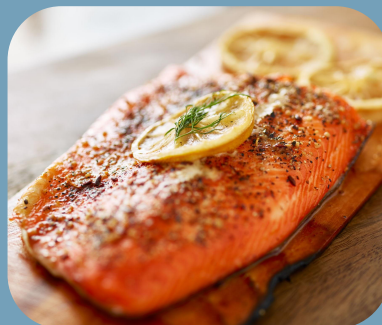
The capacity of a food to meet the EAA*** requirements (and is based on the EAA composition and bioavailability)

- $\geq 40\%$ of the total protein is comprised of EAAs

***Essential Amino Acids

U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030. 10th Edition. January 2026.

High-Quality, Nutrient-Dense Protein



Dairy is Valued Across the Lifespan



Infancy & Toddler

Full-fat yogurt and cheese are identified as nutrient-dense complementary foods



Childhood

Full-fat dairy supports energy needs and brain development



Adolescence

Dairy provides calcium and vitamin D critical for achieving peak bone mass



Pregnancy & Lactation

Dairy contributes key nutrients such as calcium and vitamin B12 to support maternal and infant health.



Older Adults

Dairy helps meet higher needs for protein, calcium, vitamin D and vitamin B12, even as calorie needs decline

Nourishing Brains, Bones, and Bodies



Growth and cognition in children

Consuming dairy foods like, milk, cheese, and yogurt during pregnancy is linked with better consumption of calcium, vitamin D, potassium, vitamin B12, choline, and iodine.



Muscle strength and function in older people

In combination with increased protein intake, exercise is recommended at individualized levels that are safe and tolerated.

Higgins KA, Bi X, Davis BJ, Barraj LM, Scrafford CG, Murphy MM. Adequacy of total usual micronutrient intakes among pregnant women in the United States by level of dairy consumption, NHANES 2003-2016. *Nutr Health*. 2022;28(4):621-631. doi:10.1177/02601060211072325

Bauer J, Biolo G, Cederholm T, et al. Evidence-based recommendations for optimal dietary protein intake in older people: A position paper from the PROT-AGE Study Group. *J Am Med Dir Assoc*. Aug 2013;14(8):542-559. doi:10.1016/j.jamda.2013.05.021

What the 2025–2030 DGA Says About Dairy



All Fat Levels Recognized

Explicit language includes whole milk and full-fat dairy, not just low-fat/fat-free



Life Stage Integration

Dairy recommendations tailored across infancy, childhood, adolescence, pregnancy & older adults



Dairy Equivalents Clarified

Updated cup-equivalents help practitioners translate portions to practical food choices

Evidence

“Dairy food (e.g., milk, cheese and yogurt) consumption is linked with improved iodine status in children and adults”

Qin Y, Cifelli CJ, Agarwal S, Fugoni VL. Dairy food consumption is beneficially linked with iodine status in US children and adults: National Health and Nutrition Exam



“Increased consumption of dairy products may help pregnant women meet micronutrient recommendations during pregnancy”

Higgins, K. A., Bi, X., Davis, B. J., Barraj, L. M., Scrafford, C. G., & Murphy, M. M. (2022). Adequacy of total usual micronutrient intakes among pregnant women in the United States by level of dairy consumption, NHANES 2003-2016. *Nutrition and health*, 28(4), 621–631. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02601060211072325>



“Health-promoting nutrients may improve the efficacy of [dairy] foods for body weight, physical performance, and reducing disease risk”

Comerford, K., Lawson, Y., Young, M., Knight, M., McKinney, K., Mpasi, P., & Mitchell, E. (2024). Executive summary: The role of dairy food intake for improving health among Black Americans across the life continuum. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 116(2), 211–218. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnma.2024.01.026>



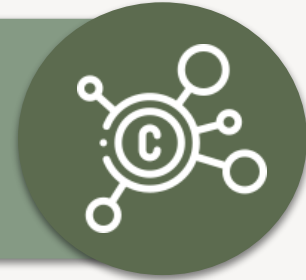
Variety of Colorful, Nutrient-Dense F/V



Evidence

Protects against the harmful effects of free radicals and contributes to the regeneration of other antioxidants in the body

Levine M, Padayatty SJ. Vitamin C. In: Ross AC, Caballero B, Cousins RJ, Tucker KL, Ziegler TR, editors. Modern nutrition in health and disease. 11th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/ Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2020. p. 399-415.



Long-term intake and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in the prevention and treatment of hypertension

Madsen H, Sen A, Aune D. Fruit and vegetable consumption and the risk of hypertension: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective studies. Eur J Nutr. 2023 Aug;62(5):1941-55.

Fruits and vegetables support glycemic control and insulin sensitivity ... making them a key component in diabetes prevention and management

Wang PY, Fang JC, Gao ZH, Zhang C, Xie SY. Higher intake of fruits, vegetables or their fiber reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes: A meta-analysis. J Diabetes Investig. 2016 Jan;7(1):56-69.



Fiber-Rich Whole Grains



Whole Grains + Dairy



Complementary nutrients: Whole grains provide fiber, B vitamins, magnesium; dairy provides calcium, vitamin D, high-quality protein



Synergistic: Both associated with reduced CVD, diabetes, and mortality risk

The DGAs Promote 8 Core Messages:



**Eat the Right
Amount for You**



**Prioritize Protein
Foods at Every
Meal**



Consume Dairy



**Incorporate
Healthy Fats**



**Eat Vegetables &
Fruit Throughout
the Day**



**Focus on Whole
Grains**



**Limit Highly
Processed Foods,
Added Sugars
& Refined
Carbohydrates**



**Limit Alcoholic
Beverages**

Dairy Included



Food Matrix:

The nutrient and non-nutrient components of foods and their molecular relationships, (i.e. chemical bonds) to each other.

Food Matrix & Transformation



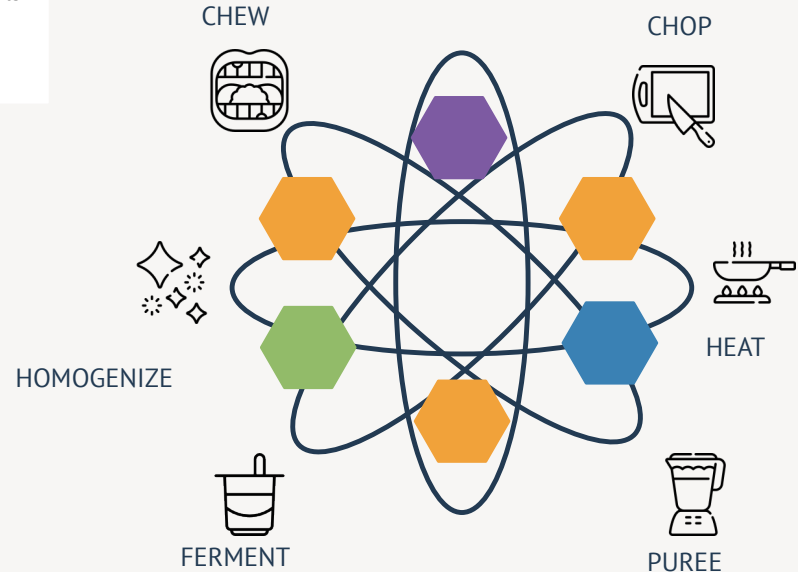
Nutritional Matrix Components:

- o Simple and complex carbohydrates
- o Amino acids
- o Fatty acids
- o Vitamins
- o Minerals
- o Bioactives

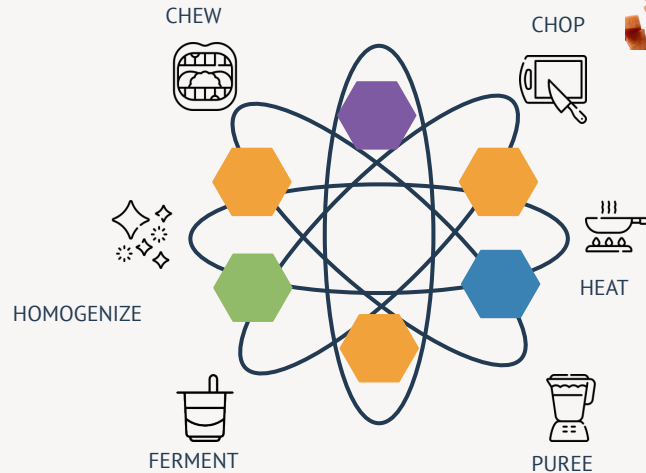
Physical Matrix Structures:

- o Solid
- o Semi-solid or gel
- o Liquid

- Macronutrients
- Minerals
- Vitamins
- Bioactives



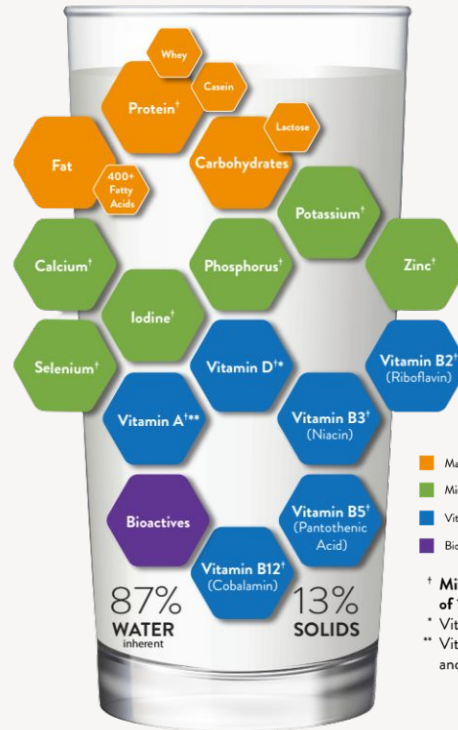
Carrot Matrix & Transformation



Dairy Matrix: More Than Nutrients

“Bioactives are constituents in foods, other than those to meet basic nutritional needs, that are responsible for a change in human health.”

- Office of Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, National Institutes of Health



[†] Milk is a good or excellent source of 13 essential nutrients.

^{*} Vitamin D is added to milk.

^{**} Vitamin A is naturally occurring in whole milk and added to reduced-fat, low-fat and fat-free milks.

The Matrix Supports Dietary Guidance

Saturated Fats and Health: A Reassessment and Proposal for Food-Based Recommendations

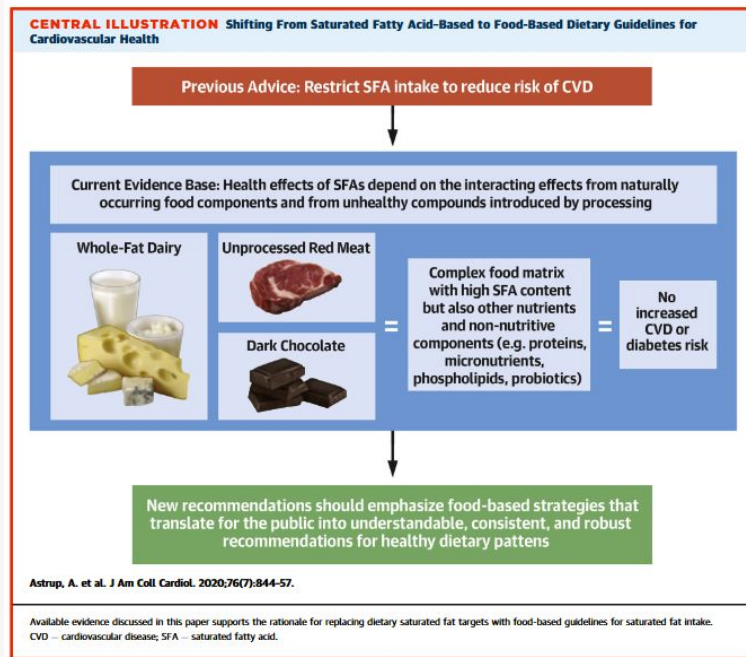
JACC State-of-the-Art Review

Arne Astrup, MD, DMSc,^a Faidon Magkos, PhD,^a Dennis M. Bier, MD,^b J. Thomas Brenna, PhD,^{c,d,e}
Marcia C. de Oliveira Otto, PhD,^f James O. Hill, PhD,^g Janet C. King, PhD,^h Andrew Mente, PhD,ⁱ Jose M. Ordovas, PhD,^j
Jeff S. Volek, PhD, RD,^k Salim Yusuf, DPM,^l Ronald M. Krauss, MD^{l,m}



Review Paper 130 papers

“A food-based approach to guiding saturated fat intake is warranted particularly since foods have a complex matrix, and their health effects cannot be predicted by the content of any individual nutrient.”



The Food Matrix Effects

Satiety

Full-fat dairy shows stronger satiety signals than low-fat, potentially reducing overall energy intake

Fermented Foods

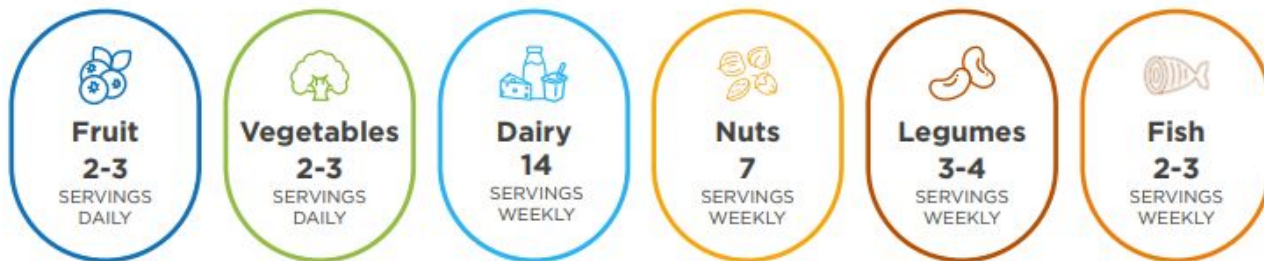
Bioactive peptides & probiotics from fermentation reduce cardiovascular and metabolic risk beyond nutrient content



IS IT TIME TO SEE WHOLE MILK DAIRY FOODS DIFFERENTLY?

When it comes to heart health, growing research indicates more room for fat flexibility

LANDMARK PURE STUDY FINDS DAIRY FOODS, INCLUDING WHOLE MILK DAIRY FOODS, BENEFIT HEART HEALTH¹



THE PURE HEALTHY EATING PATTERN

Researchers developed a healthy diet score using data from the Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology (PURE) cohort and explored its effectiveness on nearly 245,000 adults from 80 countries, and identified six food groups that were linked to health and longevity: fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, fish and dairy foods. Specifically, **diets that included 14 servings of dairy per week (mainly whole milk dairy foods) were linked to reduced risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), heart attack, stroke and mortality.** The PURE diet's beneficial effects were stronger when compared to other healthy dietary patterns like the Mediterranean and DASH diets.

Reduced Risk of Multiple Health Outcomes

SUPPORTING STUDIES SHOW...

MILK, CHEESE AND YOGURT AT A VARIETY OF FAT LEVELS MAY HAVE PROTECTIVE EFFECTS AGAINST CVD AND CVD MORTALITY.¹⁻⁶

- 1 Research has shown that a daily serving of cheese, regardless of fat level, was linked to reduced risk of multiple health outcomes including mortality and heart disease.²
- 2 Consuming more than 2 servings of dairy foods per day has been linked to a 26% reduced risk of death from heart disease.³

THE PURE DIET* WAS LINKED TO



*Risk reductions based on 9.3-year follow-up comparing greatest adherence to the PURE diet to lowest adherence to the PURE diet.

Dairy Foods: Pennies a Day a Lifetime of Benefits

One 8-oz glass of milk



13

Essential Nutrients¹

22¢

per 8-oz serving²

Excellent Source (>20% Daily Value)

- Calcium
- Iodine
- Riboflavin
- Vitamin B12

Good Source (>10% Daily Value)

- Protein
- Potassium**
- Vitamin D
- Phosphorus
- Vitamin A
- Niacin
- Pantothenic Acid
- Selenium
- Zinc

**FDA's Daily Value (DV) for potassium of 4700 mg is based on a 2005 DRI recommendation. In 2019, NASEM updated the DRI to 3400 mg. Based on the 2019 DRI, a serving of milk provides 10% of the DRI. FDA rule-making is needed to update this value for the purpose of food labeling.

1. USDA, ARS, FoodData Central, 2019.

2. Based on U.S. average price of unflavored, conventional milk, private label, 1 gal. [Source: Circana Group, L.P. Multi-outlets and convenience stores. 52 week-period ending Dec 1, 2024]

A black and white cow is standing in a wooden stall in a barn. The cow has a yellow tag on its ear with the number 4303. The stall is made of light-colored wood. In the background, there are other stalls and some hay. The title "Overcoming Dairy Barriers" is overlaid in white text on a dark semi-transparent banner across the middle of the image.

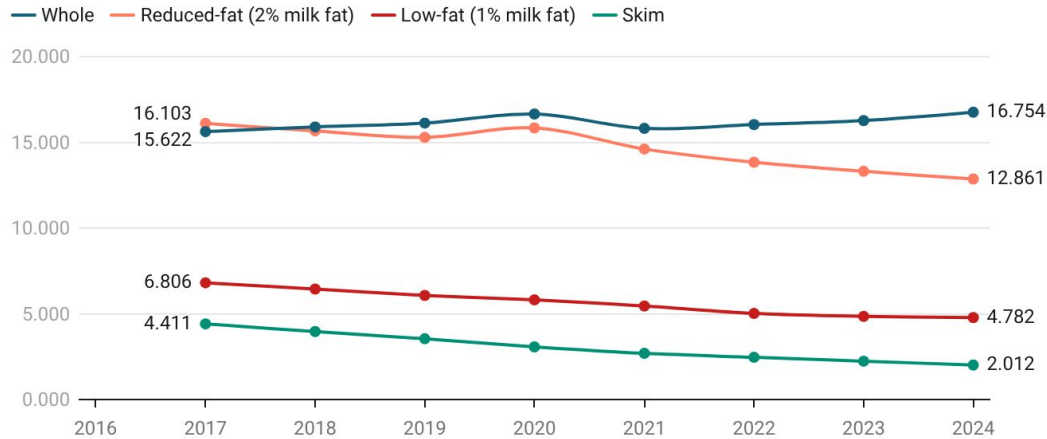
Overcoming Dairy Barriers



Current Dairy Trends

Fluid beverage milk sales quantities by product (billions of pounds), 2016-2024

U. S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Dairy Data.



Source: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Dairy Data. • Created with Datawrapper

Overcoming Dairy Barriers

Nutrition Misinformation → Lead with evidence

Perceived Intolerance → Most LI individuals can tolerate up to 12g lactose per serving

Alternative Preference → Empower clients with label-reading

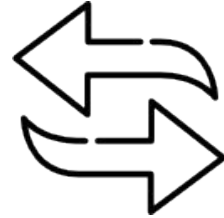
Access & Cost → Choose store-brand, included on WIC & SNAP benefits

Acceptance → Focus on dairy equivalents, variety increases acceptance

SET for Fat Flexibility

S

SWAP less nutritious sources of fat for fuller-fat, nutrient-rich dairy foods



E

ENSURE snacks stack up



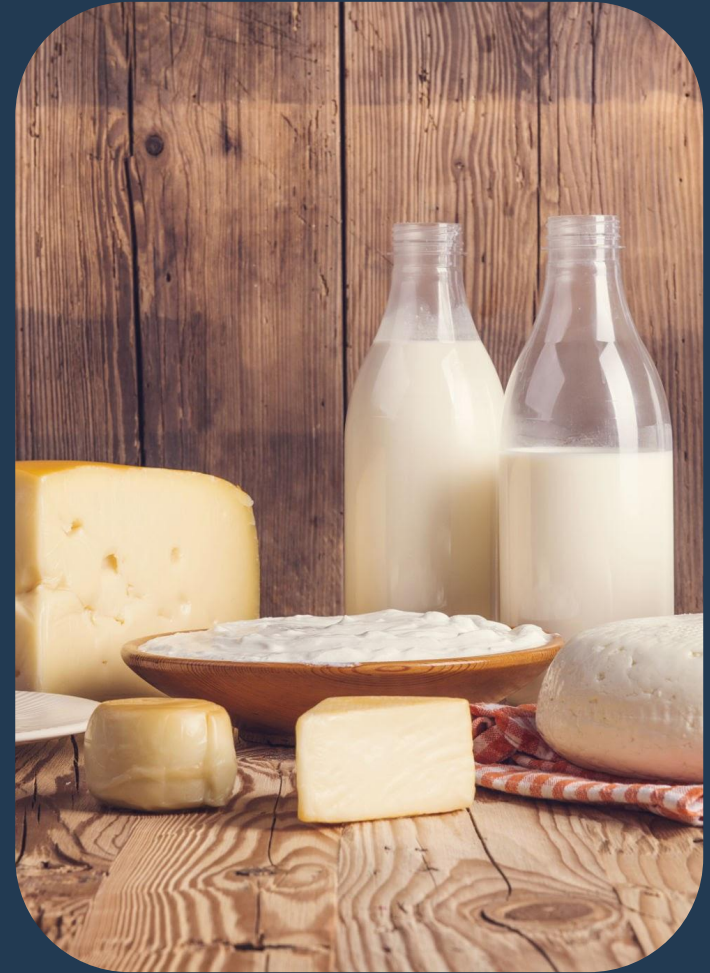
T

THINK about portions



Fat Flexibility Benefits Across All Life Stages

- Infants & Toddlers
- Childhood
- Adolescence
- Pregnancy & Lactation
- Older Adults



Dairy Across All Fat Levels

Whole Milk 8 oz.	Reduced-Fat Milk 8 oz.	Low-Fat Milk 8 oz.	Fat-Free Milk 8 oz.
3.25% 8 g Fat	2% 5g Fat	1% 2.5g Fat	≤0.5% 0g Fat
150 calories	120 calories	100 calories	80 calories
<----- 8 grams of Protein -----> <-----13 Essential Nutrients ----->			



Infants, Toddlers, & Childhood

Say this:

"After their first birthday, whole milk is actually what we recommend, the fat supports their growing brain, and you don't need to switch to low-fat until you and your family feel ready."



Adolescence

Say this:

"If you're playing sports or staying active, dairy is one of the best things you can eat right now it builds the bone density you'll need for college-age and beyond."



Pregnancy & Lactation

Say this:

"Three servings of dairy a day during pregnancy is one of the easiest ways to make sure your baby gets the calcium they need without pulling it from your own bones."



Older Adults

Say this:

"At this stage, keeping your muscles and bones strong is the priority and dairy, especially yogurt and kefir, is one of the most efficient ways to get the protein and calcium your body needs to do that."



Key Takeaways

The 2025–2030 DGA includes dairy at all fat levels so dietitians can confidently counsel on whole milk and full-fat dairy without fear of contradicting guidance, while staying within the <10% saturated fat limits

The Dairy Matrix means fat levels alone do not predict dairy's health effects, instead provide nutrients and bioactive components that contribute to health across all fat levels

Lead with the science. A growing body of evidence shows neutral to protective effects of full-fat dairy with no increased health risks

Fat flexibility can remove barriers and empower choice based on budget, preference, and nutrient needs

Dietitians are uniquely positioned to give patients something they can't get from a food label or a social media post: evidence-backed permission to enjoy dairy without fear



Patients need permission not restriction



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Q&A



Thank You

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