

Milk Group Foods Information Sheet

- All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of the Milk Group. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content such as milk, yogurt and cheese are part of the group, while foods made from milk that have very little or no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not included in the group (information from www.MyPyramid.gov).
- Lowfat and fat-free milk and dairy products are excellent sources of calcium. In addition to being calcium-rich, milk, yogurt and cheese provide other essential nutrients, all necessary for good teeth and bone health and development. These nutrients include phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, B-complex vitamins, protein, and added vitamin A and vitamin D in milk. Other foods that provide calcium include dark green, leafy vegetables, broccoli, soybeans, tofu processed with calcium, some nuts and beans, canned sardines and salmon, and other calcium-fortified foods such as orange juice with calcium added.
- Nutrition is important for good health and can help protect against many diseases now and later in life. However, one important nutrient lacking in the diet of many children and teens is **calcium**. Calcium is a nutrient that helps to make bones and teeth strong and healthy. It is used in building bone mass and also helps to reduce the risk of bone fracture due to osteoporosis, a condition where bones become fragile and can break easily.
- Our bodies continually remove and replace small amounts of calcium from our bones. If your body removes more calcium than it replaces, your bones will become weaker and have a greater chance of breaking. By eating the recommended amount of calcium, you can help your bones stay strong.
- Calcium needs are very high during the childhood and teen years, when bones are growing rapidly and calcium is required to make bones strong. Peak bone mass occurs by the end of the teen years. This is the time in our lives when bones are their strongest. By eating and drinking foods that are good sources of calcium, children and teens can help store this important nutrient in their bones for later in life. As adults, we lose calcium from our bones. The more calcium that is in the bones when loss begins, the less likely it is that bones will become fragile and fracture easily.

- Nutrition guidelines recommend that children ages 4-8 eat 800 milligrams (mg) of calcium per day, and children ages 9-13 should eat 1300 mg per day, or at least 3 servings of Milk Group foods daily. One 8-ounce glass of milk has about 300 mg of calcium.
- Compared to most other cheeses, cottage cheese has less calcium because in the manufacturing of cottage cheese, 50% to 75% of milk's calcium is removed when the whey is drained. Cottage cheeses with extra calcium are available. Check product labels. Although cottage cheese may provide less calcium than some other cheeses, cottage cheese is high in protein and generally low in fat. (information from www.nationaldairyCouncil.org).
- Explore the web: www.mypyramid.gov, www.dairyCouncil.com, www.whymilk.com, www.got-milk.com, www.moomilk.com, www.nationaldairyCouncil.org.