

# Dairy Myths vs. Dairy Truths

## Nutrition



### Myth

We aren't meant to drink cow's milk.

### Truth

Milk has been an important source of human nutrition for thousands of years in cultures all across the globe, and decades of research indicate cow's milk does a human body good.

- The leading source of thirteen essential nutrients in the diets of U.S. children.
- Associated with bone health, especially in children and adolescents.<sup>1</sup>
- Associated with a lower risk of heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure in adults.<sup>1</sup>

### Myth

You can get enough calcium from other foods.

### Truth

Milk is the No. 1 food source of calcium in the American diet; cheese is the No. 2 source. It's all about absorption.

- Dairy helps your body absorb calcium with vitamin D, potassium and magnesium for building stronger bones.
- Other naturally calcium-rich foods – such as spinach, kale and soybeans – contain oxalic and phytic acids, which limit your body's ability to absorb calcium.

You'd have to eat 8 cups of cooked spinach to absorb the same amount of calcium as you get from 1 cup of milk.<sup>2</sup>



## Myth

Milk and dairy foods cause cancer.

## Truth

After examining an extensive body of research, *Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety* wasn't able to find any conclusive evidence that dairy foods either reduce or increase the risk of cancer. The authors concluded:

**The proven health benefits of dairy foods greatly outweigh the unproven harm.**<sup>3,4</sup>

Government and public health organizations also encourage daily consumption of milk, cheese and yogurt to support an overall healthy diet and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

## Myth

Lactose intolerance is a milk allergy.

## Truth

Lactose intolerance and milk allergies are two different things. To avoid an upset stomach, it's important to understand which condition you have.

- **Lactose intolerance** is a difficulty digesting lactose (the sugar in milk) due to a deficiency in lactase (a digestive enzyme). You can still enjoy dairy and all its benefits if you have lactose intolerance!
- A **milk allergy** is an immune reaction to the protein in milk, which requires you to avoid dairy. About 2.5% of infants have this allergy, but many outgrow it.<sup>5</sup>

### Enjoy dairy even with lactose intolerance!

- Buy lactose-free cow's milk, available in your regular grocery store.
- Try yogurt with live and active cultures to aid digestion.
- Choose cheeses that are low in lactose, like cheddar, colby jack and Swiss.

## Myth

Organic milk is better for me and my family.

## Truth

All dairy milk, whether organic or conventional:

- Is **free of antibiotics**.
- Is **tested to the same high standards** at the farm, in the tanker truck and at the processing plant.
- Contains the **same thirteen essential nutrients**.

The differences lie in farm management practices. Most organic regulations involve feeding cows organically grown food, but conventional food is just as nutritious.

Regardless of your choice in the dairy case, you can be confident that the milk you choose is safe, wholesome and nutrient-rich.

**References:** **1.** Warinner, C, et. al. (2014). Direct evidence of milk consumption from ancient human dental calculus. *Scientific Reports*, 4, 7104. doi: 10.1038/srep07104 **2.** Weaver, C.M. and Heaney, R.P., Eds. In: *Calcium in Human Health*, Humana Press, Totawa, NJ, 2006, p. 137. **3.** H. Davoodi, S. Esmaili, and A.M. Mortazavian (2013). Effects of Milk and Milk Products Consumption on Cancer: A Review. *Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety*, 12, 249-264. doi: 10.1111/1541-4337.12011 **4.** Dong, JY., Zhang, L., He, K, et al. (2011). Dairy consumption and risk of breast cancer: a meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies. *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*, 127, 23-31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10549-011-1467-5> **5.** Gupta RS, et al. (2011). Prevalence, severity and distribution of childhood food allergy in the United States. *Pediatr*, 128(1):e9-17. doi: 10.1542/peds.2011-0204.



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