

Webinar: Closing the Gap Between Health and Gen Z

Questions Speakers Addressed Post-webinar

- **What is being done to educate Gen Z on a healthy diet? So much poor information on the web and they digest it as truth.**

Understanding how Gen Z digests their information can help practitioners guide clients to reputable influencers on Tik Tok and Snapchat. Dietetic and health professionals can create a handout with reputable accounts to follow and/or can opt to start a channel on a popular Gen Z social media site.

- **Why does Gen Z avoid dairy in an effort to improve diabetes?**

There is a misconception that any food with “sugar” is unhealthy for people with diabetes. Even though milk and dairy provide the natural disaccharide lactose, they may feel any sugar is unhealthy. Further, some yogurts and other dairy foods have “added” sugar and the concept of “natural” verses “added” sugars may also be confusing for Gen Z’ers. This is a good opportunity for health care professionals to discuss a healthy diet for people with diabetes. The Diabetes Plate Method created by the American Diabetes Association recommends filling half the plate with low-carb vegetables, one quarter with starches/whole grains, dairy or fruit, and one quarter of the plate with protein. Two of my cookbooks talk about the *Diabetes Plate Method: The Create-Your-Plate Diabetes Cookbook: A Plate Method Approach to Simple, Complete Meals* and *Diabetes Create Your Plate Meal Prep Cookbook: 100 Delicious Plate-Method Recipes*.

- **How do we debunk the myth that plant-based “milks” are healthier than cow’s milk?**

According to the [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), cow’s milk and dairy foods and fortified soy beverage and soy yogurt count towards your three daily servings of dairy due to their nutrient content. The dietary guidelines specifically says, “Other products sold as “milks” but made from plants (e.g., almond, rice, coconut, oat, and hemp “milks”) may contain calcium and be consumed as a source of calcium, but they are not included as part of the dairy group because their overall nutritional content is not similar to dairy milk and fortified soy beverages. Therefore, consuming these beverages does not contribute to meeting the dairy group recommendation.” As such, if a Gen Z’er would like to consume a plant-based beverage they can enjoy it as part of a healthy, well-balanced diet but should also remember to include three servings of milk and dairy group as well in order to get all the essential nutrients they need. This includes three nutrients under consumed by all age groups, calcium, vitamin D, and potassium.

- **How do you feel about all the yogurts out there that contain alternative sweeteners? "Triple zero", "2 good", etc. Greek vs regular? Very popular with this generation.**

There are many yogurt options available on store shelves—something for everyone. This allows Gen Z’ers to choose what is best for them individually. Yogurts with alternative sweeteners are appropriate for someone with diabetes, looking to lose weight, or as a personal choice. There are many yogurts available with no alternative sweeteners as well.

Greek yogurt is a strained yogurt that provides about twice the amount of protein, less lactose, and about 40% less sugar and sodium. It has a thick, creamy texture that some folks enjoy. It's nice to see so many options available for individuals to choose from. Health professional can help Gen Z clients navigate the yogurt aisle to see what best suits their beliefs, health, and lifestyle.

- **What about all of the social media influencers who are out there giving out poor information to Gen Z, how can we counteract them?**

*Refer to the first question—I feel they are asking the same thing.

- **Do you have suggestions of healthy eating apps appropriate for Gen Z?**

At this time, our speakers are not aware of any healthy eating apps for Gen Z, specifically. However, it's recommended that practitioners find reputable channels/dietetic professionals locally for the Gen Z population to outreach, if needed.

- **Do you recommend kefir?**

Absolutely! Kefir is a fermented milk beverage that contains a variety of live and active cultures-microorganisms linked to gut health. You can read more about kefir here:
<https://www.usdairy.com/news-articles/what-is-kefir>

- **Casein in the milk causes inflammation, what is your opinions regarding that?**

In healthy (non-allergic) individuals, the totality of evidence from intervention studies suggest that dairy is neutral or modestly anti-inflammatory. See:

- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31089732/>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26287637/>

- **Where are Gen Zers learning about the immune system and the connection to the immune system? Are these reliable sources?**

As elaborated in the webinar the pandemic has increased awareness and dialogue around immune health. Gen Zers also see product claims targeting diet and immune health. Trusted information may be at the clinic, through school nurses or science teachers, or dieticians. However, these authoritative sources need amplification.