

The Dairy Dilemma

When did buying milk become such a complicated task? A trip down the dairy aisle can be a long process as consumers are faced with soy, almond, coconut, hemp, or cow's milk. To add to the confusion, recently there have been some reports advising people to choose alternatives to cow's milk. The truth is as long as you are able to drink cow's milk without any negative effects it remains a safe and nutritious beverage choice.

Cow's milk is an affordable source of protein. Compared to milk alternatives it has the most protein at eight grams per cup. Soy milk is close behind with six grams, whereas almond milk, rice milk and coconut milk have only one gram or less of protein per cup. Most milk alternatives are not considered a good source of protein. If you drink a milk alternative it is important to make sure you are including high protein foods in your diet such as lean meats, beans, nuts and tofu.

Cow's milk is also a great source of vitamin D and calcium, which are important for bone health. These nutrients help protect you from osteoporosis as you age. Some people have argued that humans cannot absorb the calcium in cow's milk; however, a study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition showed that the calcium in cow's milk is more readily absorbed than the calcium in fortified milk alternatives and foods such as spinach and almonds.

There are reasons why some people do not drink cow's milk including dairy allergies, lactose intolerance or choosing to follow certain diets such as veganism. If you do not drink cow's milk, these tips can help you choose a healthy alternative:

Choose a product that is fortified. The nutrition label should indicate it has at least 30 per cent of your Daily Value (% DV) of calcium and 45 per cent of your Daily Value for vitamin D.

Look for products that are unsweetened. Many milk alternatives contain added sugars so check the ingredients list.

Drink up! No matter which milk you drink, aim for two cups each day to make sure you get enough vitamin D and calcium for healthy bones and a healthy body.

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