



## Grade Schoolers 6-12 Years:

### Building healthy habits to last a lifetime.

Dairy foods with calcium, vitamin D, protein and phosphorus can help support bone mass, which may reduce risk for osteoporosis (or bone diseases) later in life.<sup>6</sup> Dairy foods also provide sources of important nutrients that support the immune system, including high-quality protein, vitamins A and D, B12, zinc and selenium.<sup>7</sup>



## Infants 6-11 Months:

### Building the foundation for healthy eating.

At about 6 months, infants should be introduced to nutrient-rich, developmentally appropriate foods to complement human milk or iron-fortified formula feedings to ensure adequate nutrition and encourage acceptance of a wide variety of nutritious foods.<sup>1,2</sup> Cheese and yogurt offer a range of diverse tastes and textures, which can help support development of future healthy eating habits.<sup>3</sup>

## Toddlers 12-23 Months:

### Supporting growth and development.

After their first birthday, as babies transition from human milk or iron-fortified infant formula, whole milk and other dairy foods emerge as critically important sources of essential nutrients to support growth and development.<sup>4</sup>



## Preschoolers 2-5 Years:

### Delivering high-quality nutrition.

Leading health experts agree water and plain milk are the only recommended beverages for children 1 to 5 years of age.<sup>5</sup> Plant-based alternatives are not recommended due to their wide variability in nutrient content, limited evidence of bioavailability and impact on diet quality and health outcomes.<sup>5</sup>



## Teenagers 13-18 Years:

### Supplying necessary nutrition for a crucial chapter.

Adolescence is a unique growth period, making protein, calcium and other essential nutrients vitally important. However, the gap between the amount of dairy foods recommended and actually eaten widens as children age.<sup>8</sup> Teen girls are especially vulnerable to falling short of their vitamin B12 and bone-building nutrient needs.<sup>2,9</sup> Dairy foods provide more bone-beneficial nutrients per calorie than any other food group.<sup>10</sup>

## Adults 19-59 Years:

### Reducing risk of chronic diseases.

Consuming dairy foods is associated with reduced risk for several chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.<sup>11,12</sup> In addition, dairy foods can provide calcium and vitamin D, which are particularly important to accruing peak bone mass in early adulthood.<sup>2</sup>



## Older Adults 60+ Years:

### Aging vibrantly.

Healthy aging begins with healthy habits like good nutrition and wellness. As adults age, it's important to protect against health conditions related to changes in bone and muscle mass, like osteoporosis and sarcopenia. Nutrient-rich dairy foods provide high-quality protein to help maintain muscle, as well as bone building nutrients important during bone remodeling that takes place post-menopause.<sup>13,14</sup>



## Pregnancy and Breastfeeding:

### Supporting baby's brain development.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women need higher amounts of some nutrients including vitamin B12, iodine and choline.<sup>2,15</sup> As excellent sources of vitamin B12, dairy foods help support a healthy pregnancy and may help prevent vitamin B12 deficiency in infants which can lead to permanent neurological damage.<sup>16</sup> As good sources of iodine, milk, cheese and yogurt may help protect against neurocognitive defects and lower childhood IQ linked to prenatal iodine deficiency.<sup>17,18</sup> Plus, the choline<sup>†</sup> found in dairy foods can help replenish maternal stores and support the growth and development of the baby's brain and spinal cord.<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>†</sup>One serving of milk provides 8% of the Daily Value for choline.



of Americans could benefit from an extra serving of dairy foods each day.<sup>19</sup>

## Dairy Foods are Flexible to Meet Personal Preferences

Dairy foods at a variety of fat levels can contribute to health across the lifespan, and it is possible to stay within saturated fat recommendations while choosing whole milk or dairy foods made from whole milk, like cheese and yogurt. Whether it's nonfat, low-fat or full-fat, dairy foods collectively provide a unique combination of nutrients that work together to help support cardiometabolic and cognitive health and overall well-being across every stage of life.<sup>2,20-24</sup>

## Daily Dairy Food Recommendations<sup>2</sup>

Daily Calories	Daily Servings / Day
1,000 - 1,199	2 servings
1,200 - 1,599	2 ½ servings
1,600 - 3,200	3 servings



**Dollar for dollar**, dairy foods are one of the most economical sources of nutrition. In fact, people can meet the recommendation for three daily servings of dairy for under two dollars.<sup>25</sup> And there are a variety of options in the dairy case so people can customize their approach to building healthy habits.

## What Counts as a Serving of Dairy?

	<b>Milk: 1 cup</b>
	<b>Lactose-free Milk: 1 cup</b>
	<b>Yogurt: ¾ cup</b>
	<b>Kefir: 1 cup</b>
	<b>American Cheese: 1 oz</b>
	<b>Shredded Cheese: ¼ cup</b>
	<b>Hard Cheese: 1 oz</b>
	<b>Ricotta Cheese: ¼ cup</b>
	<b>Cottage Cheese: ½ cup</b>
	<b>Fortified Dairy Alternatives: 1 cup</b>

*\*Serving sizes are based on the Daily Servings by Calorie Level supplement to the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Reference Amounts Customarily Consumed as defined by the Food and Drug Administration.*



## Lactose Intolerant?

While it is a serious condition, the good news is most people with lactose intolerance can tolerate varied amounts of lactose. There are many solutions to try so you can continue to enjoy the great taste and nutritional benefits of dairy foods. For example, try working small amounts into meals or choosing foods with minimal amounts or no lactose.

### Did you know?

- ✔ Lactose-free milk is real dairy milk, just without lactose.
- ✔ Natural cheeses such as Cheddar, Colby/Monterey Jack, mozzarella and Swiss contain minimal amounts of lactose.
- ✔ Yogurt's live and active cultures help to digest lactose.
- ✔ Plus, Greek and Icelandic yogurts have even less lactose because of the straining process.

## Sources

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