

Older Adults 60+ Years



Aging Vibrantly



Healthy aging is about staying strong, independent and vital so the years ahead remain active and fulfilling. A balanced eating pattern fuels strong muscles and bones, heart health, a healthy weight and overall wellness. Dairy foods deliver high-quality protein that can help preserve muscle mass, along with key nutrients that support bone remodeling — especially at a time when bone loss can accelerate.^{1,2} That’s why including dairy as part of a balanced eating pattern can help protect strength and mobility — because healthy aging is about adding life to years.



Dairy’s Unique Contributions

Whether working, enjoying retirement, caring for loved ones or staying active with children and grandchildren, older adults want to maintain strength, energy and independence. Simple, consistent habits like strength training and nourishing eating habits that prioritize nutrient-dense foods — including dairy foods, meats, seafood, eggs, legumes and whole plant foods — provide essential nutrients that can help support aging with vitality.³

Dairy can help deliver on many of the unique nutrition needs to support healthy aging:



High-quality protein helps maintain muscle health.



Calcium, phosphorus and vitamin D help sustain strong bones and teeth and reduce risk of fractures and falls.⁴



Vitamin B12 plays a critical role in nerve function.⁵



Choline* supports cognitive function.^{6,7}
**One serving of milk provides 8% of the Daily Value for choline.*



Recommended Daily Dairy Servings

 **3 servings^{8*}**

**3 servings of dairy are recommended based on a daily calorie level of 1,600 calories or more. See backside for what counts as a serving of dairy. There are a variety of ways to enjoy milk, cheese and yogurt to meet the recommended daily servings.*

Special Considerations



Muscle health: Maintaining optimal muscle mass is one way to stay well through older adulthood. While some loss of muscle is expected, there are ways to help minimize it to support healthy aging, including regular resistance training and consuming a balanced diet with high-quality protein each day.



Affordability: Dollar for dollar, dairy foods are one of the most affordable sources of nutrition. In fact, three servings of milk can cost less than two dollars per day,⁹ and research has shown that dairy foods are the lowest cost sources of calcium and vitamin D — essential nutrients many Americans struggle to get enough of.^{10,11}



Lactose: Lactose intolerance is a condition to take seriously. The good news is most people living with lactose intolerance can handle small amounts of lactose. There are many solutions that may help people enjoy the great taste and nutritional benefits of dairy foods without discomfort. For example, lactose-free dairy milk, dairy foods with minimal or no lactose like hard cheeses (such as Cheddar) or yogurt or kefir containing live and active cultures that help digest the lactose are all ways to incorporate dairy foods into a lower-lactose or lactose-free eating style.





Try this Recipe

Baked Oats with Cottage Cheese and Dried Fruit Sprinkles

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup freeze-dried blueberries and strawberries
- 2 cups old-fashioned or quick cooking oats
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 2 ripe bananas
- 4 eggs
- 4 tablespoons agave nectar or honey
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease four 8-ounce ramekins or oven-safe bowls with butter or cooking spray.
2. Place freeze-dried blueberries and strawberries in a zip-top bag and crush using a rolling pin. Fruit pieces should be roughly the size of sprinkles. Set aside.
3. In a blender, combine oats, cottage cheese, bananas, eggs, agave nectar (or honey), baking powder and salt. Pulse until the mixture is combined and the oats are starting to break down but not completely smooth. Do not over mix.
4. Using a spoon or spatula, gently fold ¼ cup of freeze-dried fruit into batter.
5. Divide batter between four prepared ramekins or bowls. Bake in preheated oven for 25 minutes, or until cakes are set. Remove from oven and allow to cool for 5 minutes before serving.
6. To serve, garnish each cake with a dollop of Greek yogurt, freeze-dried fruit “sprinkles” and a drizzle of honey, if desired.

Sources

1. International Osteoporosis Foundation. Serve Up, Bone Strength. Milk and dairy products are good for bone health Fact Sheet. <https://share.osteoporosis.foundation/WOD/2015/fact-sheets/WOD15-fact-sheet-dairy.pdf>
2. Du Y, Oh C, No J. Advantage of Dairy for Improving Aging Muscle. *J Obes Metab Syndr*. 2019 Sep;28(3):167-174. doi: 10.7570/jomes.2019.28.3.167. Epub 2019 Mar 30. PMID: 31583381; PMCID: PMC6774446
3. U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030. <https://cdn.realfood.gov/D-GA.pdf>
4. Iuliano S, Poon S, Robbins J, et al. Effect of dietary sources of calcium and protein on hip fractures and falls in older adults in residential care: cluster randomised controlled trial. *BMJ*. 2021;375:n2364. Published 2021 Oct 20. Zelman K. Micronutrients: Choline. Food & Nutrition. 2017. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminB12-HealthProfessional/>
5. Vitamin B12: Health Professional Fact Sheet, National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplements, last updated Nov. 12, 2025.
6. Zelman K. Micronutrients: Choline. Food & Nutrition. 2017.



Make Every Bite & Sip Count



Use milk instead of water in oatmeal and soups and top with a dollop of Greek yogurt to enhance creaminess while adding a splash of nutrients and high-quality protein.



It can be hard for older adults to stay hydrated. Luckily, milk naturally contains ~90% water, plus it comes with important nutrients that play a role in hydration like the electrolytes potassium and sodium.

What Counts as a Serving of Dairy?

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

*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.

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8. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030: Daily Servings by Calorie Level. <https://cdn.realfood.gov/Daily%20Serving%20Sizes.pdf>
9. Unger AL, Comerford KB, Brown K, Lamin-Bangura K, Slimko M and Cifelli CJ (2025) Dairy foods support healthy dietary patterns and nutrition security in the United States: a nutrient adequacy and affordability perspective. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 9:1669062. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2025.1669062
10. Drewnowski A. The contribution of milk and milk products to micronutrient density and affordability of the U.S. diet. *J Am Coll Nutr.* 2011;30(5 Suppl 1):422S-8S.
11. Hess J, Cifelli C, Agarwal S, Fulgoni V III. Comparing the cost of essential nutrients from different food sources in the American diet (OR20-04-19). *Curr Dev Nutr.* 2019;3(1).

Milk, yogurt and cheese are nutrient-dense foods that can help nourish people throughout life. Dairy foods, including lactose-free varieties, are nutritious and accessible options that can help fill nutrient gaps and contribute to healthy eating patterns. To learn more about how dairy foods help people thrive across the lifespan, visit USDairy.com.

