

Doing a Body Good? Maybe Not.

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The ubiquitous “Got Milk?” campaign may not be as recognizable as Ronald McDonald yet, but it seems like the white mustache is well on its way to being a universally recognized symbol. A big glass of the white stuff has become synonymous with ideas about health, but does a glass of milk actually do a body good, as the ads claim, though? According to the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), not so much.

In a recent publication based on the latest research, HSPH has clarified several issues about milk and dairy and made the recommendation that people consume no more than 1 serving per day. As a naturopathic physician, I also often recommend decreasing or eliminating dairy products. Why? Read on.

1. Milk is seen as healthy as a source of calcium, but milk is not the best nor even a very good source of calcium. Because milk also contains high amounts of phosphorus which competes for absorption, we don't absorb all of the calcium found in milk. In addition, diets high in protein, another lauded quality of milk and dairy products, tend to increase calcium excretion, which is more highly linked to osteoporosis than inadequate calcium intake in Western society.

2. Milk is not the same food that it used to be. The milk we pick up off the shelf at our supermarkets is milk is highly processed and potentially contaminated. Milk may be contaminated with hormones, antibiotics, residues from pesticides or herbicides. And the processed of pasteurizing, homogenizing and even skimming (to make skim milk) cause changes in the structure, concentration and activity of the fats, proteins and enzymes found in milk. For these reasons, if you choose to consume milk or dairy products, it is so important that you purchase organic, rBGH-free dairy products, and some make the argument that organic, locally produced, raw milk may be the best option.

3. Milk may increase ovarian and prostate cancer risks. More research is needed in both

of these topics, but there is some evidence to suggest that high dairy intake is associated with modestly higher risks of developing ovarian cancer and double the risk of developing fatal prostate cancer.

4. Milk contains two highly allergenic proteins, casein and whey, which are also frequently used as food additives, so even people who don't consume high amounts of dairy are exposed. When I run food allergy tests, the dairy section frequently lights up and I also find that people experience great clinical improvements after eliminating dairy.

5. Dairy is also highly inflammatory in nature, and consumption can contribute to symptoms of all kinds of conditions, such as IBS, constipation, asthma, arthritis, pain, fatigue, weight gain, high cholesterol and high blood pressure and allergies and common cold. Have you ever noticed that you tend to cough or sniffle after eating a bagel with cream cheese or your daily latte?

6. Lactose intolerance is caused by a deficiency in lactase, the enzyme used to digest the milk sugar lactose. Symptoms of intolerance include bloating, cramps, gas and nausea.

Milk, like all foods, is a huge topic and its consumption is a multifaceted issue. If you choose to drink milk, that's okay. We are blessed with abundance and the freedom to make those choices. But be aware that consuming high quantities of milk isn't necessarily the best choice for your health. Check out the Harvard School of Public Health website www.hsph.harvard.edu and our blog truehealthmedicine.blogspot.com for more information and the latest updates on health and nutrition.



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