

DAIRY – GOOD OR BAD?

When we were kids, we had to drink our milk because it was good for our bones. Nobody asked whether our bones would prefer a milkshake. As adults, do we really still need dairy?? Before anyone answers, understand that my ice cream and I have a very close relationship.

If you like drinking milk – or giving your double stuffed Oreos swimming lessons – good for you! One cup has 8 grams of protein, about ¼ of your daily calcium, and 14% of your daily vitamin D. That's a lot of responsibility for something I mainly use to dunk cookies. You can also turn to yogurt, kefir, and cheese for dairy nutrients if drinking plain milk makes you gag or live in the bathroom.

Having trouble digesting dairy all of a sudden? Here comes everyone's favorite explanation: you're getting older. Apparently, the enzyme that digest milk sugar can start cutting back its hours, right along with your eyesight, memory, and balance. Nobody submitted a retirement request, but here we are. Lactose-free dairy are a product like Lactaid may be an option. Wonderful. My ice cream now requires a support staff.

But now, there are plant-based milks a plenty. Oat, almond coconut… apparently, everything gets to be milk now. I'm waiting for potato milk so I can finally commit to a beverage. Hod do they compare with cow's milk? Many are fortified with calcium and vitamins A and D , but protein, B12, magnesium, potassium, and other nutrients can come up short. Soy milk does bring about 7 grams of protein per cup to the party. If you choose a plant milk, check for added calcium and vitamin D. My Oreos will conduct their own taste test. They have very strict standards and absolutely no credentials.

But What about cheese? I put cheese on everything!! Well, not my ice cream. I do have boundaries. People sometimes cut back on cheese because of concerns about "bad" cholesterol, of LDL. But here's a study that caught my

attention: people ate nonfat cheese, regular cheese, or hardly any cheese for 8 weeks, and cholesterol levels didn't increase in the cheese-eating groups. I would like to know how one volunteers for these studies. Eight weeks of cheese? Finally, a commitment I could stick with! That's not a free pass to put cheese on absolutely everything, of course. Apparently "promising research" and "permission to eat and entire cheese ball" are two different things. Science can be so picky.