

Is Milk Good For You?

Contributed by Steve Gillman
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{bot_wrgoogle}Though most people still think that milk is good for their bones, there is no evidence for this. The famous Harvard Nurses Study followed more than 77,000 women for over twelve years. Among other things, researchers wanted to see if milk would help prevent or slow the progression of osteoporosis (a disease that makes bones more brittle). Not only was there no evidence of any benefit, researcher Doctor Robert M. Kradjian of Seton Medical Center in California points out that "Fracture rates were higher for those who consumed three or more servings, compared to those who did not drink milk."

Some scientists now believe that the particular types of proteins in milk may lead to bone damage. In addition, most agree that the calcium found in dairy products isn't very absorbable for humans. Calcium found in plants is much easier to absorb. These sources include leafy green vegetables, as well as sesame butter (used in humus), some other seeds, whole grains and nuts.

Milk And Digestion

Lactose intolerance is another problem with milk. I once cared for a little girl who vomited whenever she ate ice cream or drank milk. After a bit of research I found that most Native Americans like her don't have the enzymes necessary to digest lactose, which is a natural milk sugar. Most adults of all races eventually lose their ability to easily digest dairy products, resulting in digestive problems, gas and irritable bowels.

Lactase supplements can help. The enzyme lactase helps you digest lactose. You simply take a capsule whenever you eat dairy products, convincing a two-year-old of that wasn't easy. But lactose intolerance is not the only problem with milk.

Milk Allergies

Some, possibly many people are allergic to the proteins in milk and dairy products. Common symptoms include inflammation in the upper respiratory tract and sometimes throughout the body. People often suffer from this for years before learning why. Milk and dairy allergies are also a common cause of sinusitis, as well as frequent colds and ear infections.

It seems increasingly likely that milk is bad for you. But if you're not allergic to dairy, and not lactose intolerant, it may not do any harm. More good news: yoghurt and soft cheeses may digest more easily, and have beneficial substances not found in milk. Of course, we haven't even touched on the possibility that the hormones fed to cows may pass into humans and have unhealthy effects. We're still waiting for the research on that.

The Bottom Line?

You may wonder why you don't hear more about these issues. Dairy producers spend millions to promote their products as healthy, and have an obvious profit motive to do so. But why does our own government promote the idea that milk is a health food? Perhaps it is because dairy producers are subsidized, and would require more subsidies if sales dropped. Is milk good for you? I guess it is if you're a dairy farmer.

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