

Problems with Milk and Dairy Products

The National Health Association (NHA) strongly emphasizes that milk and dairy products are not fit for human consumption and have no place in the diets of children or adults. There are no animals in nature that drink the milk of other species at any time in their lives, and certainly not after the age of weaning. Commercial interests have promoted the dangerous idea that milk consumption “does a body good” and is necessary for normal human growth and health.

Growth and Development

Following birth, all animals in nature are best suited to consume only their mother's milk during their early growing periods and then wean from milk consumption for the rest of their lives. The nutrient content of any mother's milk has evolved for the sole purpose of supporting the ideal growth and development of the babies of that species. Mother's milk is unique growth fluid for human babies, just as cow's or goat's milk is for baby cows and goats. For example, cow's milk has a significantly higher protein content than human milk because cows grow to full maturity within one to three years, while humans achieve full maturity over a 15- to 20-year period.

If cow's milk (which also has added growth hormones and antibiotics from the commercial dairy industry) is continually fed to human babies and children, it can foster rapid premature growth and development that is not in their best interest, producing hormonal and other body changes that can compromise their health as children, teenagers, and adults. Childhood consumption of cow's

milk can cause abnormal elevations in reproductive and growth hormones that can foster premature menstruation in girls and premature sexual development and excessive body fat and weight gain in both young girls and boys. It also can increase the risk of breast, ovarian, uterine, and prostate cancer in adulthood.

Breast and Prostate Cancer

The consumption of milk and dairy products has clear and direct effects on the risk of breast and prostate cancers in adults. Women consuming the most cheese had more than a 50 percent increased risk of breast cancer.¹ **Women who consumed milk demonstrated a dose-related increase in breast cancer risk at even the low intake of one-quarter to one-third cup of milk per day; one, two, or three cups per day increased the risk of breast cancer by 30, 50, and 80 percent, respectively.**² Men consuming three servings of dairy products daily increased the risk of death from prostate cancer by more than 140 percent,³ while an increased intake of all dairy products, including whole and skim milk, significantly increased the risk of prostate cancer.⁴

Lactose Intolerance

Infants and children produce enzymes that break down and digest lactose, the sugar found in breast and cow's milk. However, as children grow and approach a natural age of weaning within the first few years of life, these enzymes become less efficient, resulting in the children becoming more lactose intolerant. While this intolerance is seen in children across

various ethnic and racial groups, there are significant differences in the extent of the intolerance: 95 percent of Asians, 70–75 percent of Native and African Americans, and 15 percent of Caucasians exhibit it. As a result, the continual consumption of milk can create the symptoms of lactose intolerance—gas, bloating, stomach upset, and diarrhea.

Insulin Resistance and Diabetes

The high saturated-fat content of milk and dairy products interferes with the normal function of insulin, promoting insulin resistance that inhibits the entry of blood sugar into body cells. This leads to increases in blood sugar and body fat and contributes to the development of diabetes and its devastating consequences in both children and adults. Such diets also contain an excessive amount of insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1), which has been associated with a higher risk of prostate, breast, and colorectal cancer. Milk is the biggest culprit and greatest source of this factor; even small increases in milk consumption create dangerous dose-related increases of IGF-1.⁵

Food Addiction and Inflammation

Examining the chemistry of dairy and how it interacts with the body reveals additional reasons for concern. The major protein in milk, casein, is converted in the body into beta-casomorphine.⁶ Casomorphins are protein fragments with opiate-like effects similar to endorphins (the natural opiates in our brains) and synthetic/

pharmaceutical opiates. So, milk and other dairy products, including cheese, ice cream, yogurt, and butter, may trigger the high and the potential addiction resulting from a mood-altering opiate response. When you attempt to abruptly eliminate milk and dairy products, you can experience an opiate-like withdrawal that increases craving and makes it hard to remove these foods from your diet. Even worse, casomorphins also act as direct histamine promoters in humans, triggering allergic and inflammatory responses.⁷ This assault on the immune system, combined with increased inflammation, can interfere with satiety signals, promote overeating, and lead to compulsive food use, compromising successful long-term weight loss.

Essential Fatty Acids and Inflammation

The routine and excessive consumption of milk and dairy products provides dangerous excesses of the essential fatty acids linoleic acid and arachidonic acid. These polyunsaturated fatty acids are key components of the omega-6 pathway in the body that produces chemical factors (prostaglandins, thromboxanes, and leukotrienes) that increase inflammation. This exaggeration of the omega-6 pathway and chronic inflammation is the foundation for all chronic diseases, including cancer.

Heart and Alzheimer's Disease

Milk and dairy products are significant sources of saturated fat and cholesterol, which play major roles in blocking blood vessels to the heart and brain. This contributes to heart disease, the number one killer in the United States, as well as to potential brain damage associated with cognitive dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Bone Health, Calcium, and Magnesium

Because milk and dairy products have a high calcium content, they are often promoted for the prevention and reversal of osteoporosis and fractures that can occur from decreased bone density. However, numerous studies have shown that dietary calcium is not associated with the risk of fractures, and there is no evidence that increasing dietary calcium

from milk and dairy products prevents fractures.^{8,9,10} In men, it also has been shown that milk consumed in their teenage years correlates with a significantly higher risk of hip fractures later in life.¹¹ In fact, the high protein content of milk and dairy products may actually promote bone loss by urging the body to leach calcium from bone in order to neutralize the acid-forming nature of these foods. Healthy bones require weight-bearing activity, adequate vitamin D, and an important balance of dietary calcium and magnesium from a diversity of whole plant foods, especially green leafy vegetables.

The consumption of milk and dairy products may also adversely affect this delicate and important balance of calcium and magnesium. Dietary intakes of calcium and magnesium influence each other's absorption in the intestine; high calcium intake may decrease magnesium absorption and vice versa. Calcium is a mineral of excitability that activates muscle contraction and neurotransmitter release in the brain and nervous system. Magnesium is a mineral of sedation that can reduce anxiety and insomnia and relax muscle cramping and tension to improve constipation and fecal elimination. Therefore, the high calcium content of milk and dairy products may interfere with the absorption of magnesium and may contribute to a calcium dominance that may compromise bone health as well as a variety of other body functions.

As a result of these data, the NHA unequivocally recommends eliminating all animal-derived milk and dairy products from the diet. If you need any dairy-like products for any reason, such as for recipes or use on cereals, the NHA strongly recommends using nondairy, plant-derived milks, yogurts, and cheeses without added processed oils and salt. With that in mind, the resources provided by the NHA in its journal, *Health Science* magazine, provide the healthiest recipes for making alternative SOS-free dairy products as well as for meals and desserts that incorporate dairy-like ingredients.

The NHA has been making people aware of the dangers and risks of traditional milk and dairy products for decades. It has an unwavering commitment to helping people avoid these foods in order to break the insidious grasp of the dairy and food processing industries that produce and promote them.

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