

Milk & Milk Products

Milk and milk products is the name given to the group of foods derived from milk. These foods used to be called dairy products but the term milk and milk products excludes cream and butter which have a different nutritional composition (higher in fat).

Milk and milk products are rich in calcium and are good sources of B vitamins riboflavin and vitamin B12. Milk and milk products play an important part in our diet by helping to build strong bones and teeth. From the age of two years it is recommended that we give young children 2-3 servings of milk and milk products a day. A serving is equivalent to:

- 1 cup of reduced or low fat milk
- 2 slices of lower fat cheese, such as edam
- 1 pottle of yoghurt or dairy food
- 2 small scoops ice-cream
- ½ cup custard



Children who eat no foods from this food group need to eat other foods that provide them with these nutrients for growth and energy, and should get advice from a registered dietitian to ensure that they are getting enough for their needs.

Here are some common questions asked about milk and milk products:

What type of milk should my young child drink?

Children under the age of one should not be given cow's milk as a drink. Infants should be given breast milk or an infant formula. From the age of one year, whole cow's milk can be introduced. Reduced-fat milk or low-fat milk can be introduced from about two years of age.

What about milk allergy?

It is very important to get cow's milk allergies diagnosed by a medical doctor before cow's milk is excluded from a young child's diet. It is also important to replace cow's milk with nutritionally equivalent foods (see above).

What about soy milks?

Soy milks are made from soybeans that have been processed. Some soy milks have had calcium added to them to provide a similar level of calcium to cow's milk. It is also possible to buy soy based infant formula in New Zealand.

Soy-based formulas are not recommended for infant feeding unless there are medical reasons to support this. It is only appropriate for vegan infants who are not breastfed.

My 18 month old child won't drink milk, what shall I do?

Provide enough opportunities for your child to eat foods from the milk and milk products group. For example, if a child has milk on her breakfast cereal, some yoghurt at lunchtime and fruit and custard at dinner, she will be getting plenty of milk and milk products each day.



Dairy food or Yoghurt?

Dairy food and yoghurt are both great choices as they are both low in fat and a good source of calcium. Dairy food is made from milk thickened with starch and vegetable gums while yoghurt is made from milk thickened by a yoghurt culture. Flavoured yoghurt and dairy food have added sugar. Natural yoghurt (plain) has no added sugar.