

### There are Plenty of Good Reasons to Drink Milk

There really are lots of good reasons to drink milk and eat yogurt and cheese. However, losing weight is *not* one of them for most people, no matter what the ads suggest. There are a few research reports that do suggest that lab rats (and maybe some people) might lose more weight if they drank more milk. But there are just as many finding that milk and yogurt don't help with weight loss.

All of the fewer than 50 people in the studies who lost weight were overweight to begin. They were also eating diets that were low in calcium and dairy, and low in protein. Others have studied people who were not overweight, or were all ready eating enough dairy and calcium or enough protein. These found that milk or dairy products made did not make any difference in weight loss. Many of us would not be helped.

So other than weight loss, why drink milk or eat yogurt? For one, milk and dairy products are good sources of very good quality protein. Protein not only builds muscle, it also supports our immune system and digests our food.

Dairy products also contain calcium, potassium, phosphorus and magnesium. All of these minerals are involved in managing our blood pressure. With enough calcium, potassium and magnesium in our diets, sodium does not have as great an effect on our arteries.

Phosphorus is necessary to more energy around, to get it to the muscles that need it. Calcium of is also a major player on the bone and teeth team, as is phosphorus. Taking out the fat to make skim or low fat milk leaves all the good stuff too. And calcium is also essential for our nerves. Without calcium the messages from

the brain telling the muscle to move would never get there. Strong bones and teeth, nerves that make muscles move, they all depend on calcium and the other minerals.

It doesn't matter if you use lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk, cheese, ice cream or yogurt. Taking out the lactose does not remove the protein or the minerals. Canned and powdered milk also have all the nutrients. Whatever form or flavor you prefer, get your low-fat dairy every day to keep your bones, muscles, nerves and blood pressure healthy.