

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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One whole page of nutrition tips that come with the new ChooseMyPlate.gov logo is devoted to getting our dairy products. Besides the sweet, creamy white drink to pour over our bowl of cereal, what other choices do we have? And besides calcium to keep our bones strong, why is there so much emphasis on dairy? There are several answers to both of those questions.

Dairy products certainly are our best sources for calcium. We absorb more of it from them than from any of the other sources. For example, it would take about 3 cups of cooked greens to give us the same amount of calcium as one glass of milk or 1 ½ ounces of cheese. Since the recommended amount of calcium per day is what's in 2 or 3 glasses of milk, we would get very tired of 8 or 9 cups of cooked greens every day!

Most people would tell you that sure, milk is good because it has calcium, and calcium is good for our bones. That's a good start, but just a start. Milk is also a good source of protein and vitamin D, a vitamin that's been tied to a whole list of chronic diseases, from diabetes to eye health. More is better on that one.

Dairy products are also good sources of potassium, and have some magnesium too. Along with calcium these three counteract sodium's effect on our blood pressure. They bring it down when sodium makes it go up. So dairy products are great choices for anyone concerned with their blood pressure.

The one limit we should put on our dairy intake is fat. Aim for not more than 1% milk, and if you can manage skim, go for it! If you're drinking whole milk (that's in the

red cap jug), start working down gradually. Add a spoonful or two of powdered milk to the skim to make it thicker until you get used to it. The powder adds even more of the minerals and protein.

Many other dairy products have the same nutritional benefits, and low-fat limits, of liquid milk. So, look for reduced fat cheeses to top your casseroles, tacos and sandwiches. There are several brands on the market now that have the same great taste as the fattier kinds. Try several to see which you prefer. The trick to cooking with low-fat cheese is to not let it get too hot. So cook the casserole first without cheese, then sprinkle it over top for just the last 5 to 10 minutes. Or hide the low-fat cheese in the middle of the dish.

Yogurt and Greek yogurt are also great sources of protein and minerals. They have less lactose than milk, which makes them good choices for people who don't handle milk sugar well. Most recipes that call for sour cream will work as well with plain yogurt. Another good substitution that gives you plenty of nutrition and flavor without all the fat is using low-fat or fat-free cottage or ricotta cheese instead of cream cheese. Put the cheese in the blender for a second or two to make it smooth and creamy first.

Evaporated milk, fat-free, is another good, concentrated source of protein and minerals. Use it instead of cream for baking and many other recipes. If you put a can of evaporated milk in the freezer for just an hour or two you'll be able to whip it like cream too. Chill the bowl and beaters before whipping to make it whip even better.

Of course most of us think of dessert too when we think of dairy products. Here's where we need to be careful. Read labels of ice creams, frozen yogurt and puddings before you make your choice. There are plenty of lower fat frozen desserts that taste

great. Try them for your special dinners. And order that latte or cappuccino fat free too!
The caffeine's fine without all the extra calories.

Here's a low-fat, full-flavor dinner - pizza! This serves 10, so make a big salad and invite the neighbors over.

Cheese Lovers' Pizza Squares

1 13-oz can refrigerated pizza dough	1 cup ricotta cheese
2 cups (8 oz) shredded, part skim mozzarella cheese	1 oz turkey pepperoni
2 ripe plum tomatoes, thinly sliced	1 cup sliced yellow bell pepper
1 tsp dried oregano (or pizza seasoning)	2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 400°F. Press pizza dough into 10x15 inch baking pan. Bake 12 minutes. Remove from oven but leave oven on. Spread ricotta over dough. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese over, then top with pepperoni, tomatoes, pepper and finally oregano. Bake 6 minutes, until mozzarella melts. Sprinkle with parsley, cut into squares, and serve. Offer crushed red pepper and grated Parmesan on the side. Serves 10.