

New study shows children benefit from drinking chocolate/flavored milk

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A new study released today in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that children who drink flavored or plain milk consume more nutrients and have a lower or comparable body mass index (BMI – a measure of body fatness) than children who don't drink milk.

“Milk contains many nutrients that are important for children. We learned in our research that children who drink milk, including plain and flavored milk, have higher intakes of many nutrients that are low in children's diets, and comparable or lower BMIs compared to children who don't drink milk,” said Mary Murphy, MS, RD, co-author of the study. “Limiting access to flavored milks in schools and elsewhere may have the undesirable effect of further reducing intakes of many essential nutrients provided by milk.”

The study compared nutrient intakes and BMIs among 7,557 U.S. children and adolescents ages 2-18 years drinking flavored milk (with or without plain milk), exclusively plain milk and no milk. All comparisons were adjusted for the amount of calories reported as well as age allowing for differences to be examined based on equal consumption of calories and age distributions. Results showed milk drinkers (flavored and plain) had significantly higher intakes of vitamin A, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium and potassium than non-milk drinkers.

In addition, BMI measures of milk drinkers were comparable to or lower than measures of non-milk drinkers. Intake of added sugars did not

differ between flavored milk drinkers and non-milk drinkers. Among females 12-18 years of age, average calcium intakes by flavored milk drinkers and exclusively plain milk drinkers were nearly double the calcium intakes of non-milk drinkers.

Rachel Johnson, PhD, MPH, RD, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Professor of Nutrition at the University of Vermont, a co-author of the study noted, “Intakes of added sugars were comparable between flavored milk drinkers and non-milk drinkers confirming that the inclusion of flavored milk in the diet does not lead to significantly higher added sugar intakes by children and adolescents.”

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourage children to enjoy three age-appropriate servings of low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese or yogurt each day. Currently, less than half of children ages 2-8 and only about one-quarter of children ages 9-19 meet the recommended dairy food intake. Flavored milks can provide part of the solution for meeting these recommendations. According to the Dietary Guidelines, small amounts of sugars added to nutrient-rich foods, such as low-fat and fat-free dairy products, may increase a person’s intake of such foods by enhancing the taste of these products, thus improving nutrient intake without contributing excessive calories.² In addition, the School Milk Pilot Test found that school milk consumption increased by 37 percent through specific improvements such as plastic packaging, one or more additional flavors, and better refrigeration and merchandising.

“Child health is a top priority for the dairy industry and this research shows that both flavored and plain milk can be an important part of children’s daily diets,” said Karen Kafer, vice president of nutrition affairs-health partnerships at the National Dairy Council. “Flavored milk is a great tasting, nutrient-rich beverage that makes it easy for consumers of all ages to meet the recommended servings of dairy foods each day.”

Source: Edelman Public Relations

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