

Study highlights significant dairy shortfall

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(Medical Xpress) -- Australian researchers have called for a focus on public health interventions that increase dairy food consumption following a new study published this week.

Researchers from the University of South Australia developed a new method to assess [dietary patterns](#) and found that most Australians are falling short of the recommended consumption of [dairy foods](#).

The study published in the [Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health](#) indicated that the under-consumption of milk, cheese and yogurt is a significant health issue in Australia with 73 per cent of women and 58 per cent of men failing to get their minimum recommended intake.[1]

The situation is worse for [teenagers](#) with 62 per cent of boys and 83 per cent of girls failing to have the recommended three serves of these dairy foods daily.

Co-author Professor Leonie Segal said this widespread under consumption was likely to be having a significant detrimental impact on the nation's health.

“There is growing evidence linking recommended dairy food intake to better health outcomes and our study results highlight the need to promote increased dairy consumption in public health campaigns,” she said.

According to evidence statements in the NHMRC draft Dietary Guidelines, consumption of milk and dairy foods is linked to a reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and colorectal cancer – some of the main causes of death in Australia.

The evidence statements also show milk, cheese and yogurt are not linked to an increased risk of overweight or obesity.[2] Interestingly the evidence for these health benefits relates to both regular-fat and reduced-fat varieties of dairy.

“There is a tendency to focus on low consumption of fruit and vegetables and the over-consumption of junk food, but it is important to consider the whole diet including the intake of dairy foods if we are to address diet-related disease,” Professor Segal said.

Dairy Australia Dietitian Glenys Zucco said dairy's health benefits are well established and this new information highlighted an urgent need to promote the recommended daily intake of dairy foods in Australia.

“It’s a concern so many [Australians](#) are missing out on the health and nutritional benefits dairy provide,” Ms Zucco said.

The research also highlights the need for on-going collection of information on food intake in order to monitor the effect of public health campaigns to enhance diet.

Note: This study formed part of a larger analysis that was funded by a grant from Dairy Australia. Dairy Australia provided industry estimates for per capita consumption of milk, cheese and [yogurt](#), but otherwise had no role in the development, analysis, or drafting of the research article, or in the decision to publish.

More information: [1] Doidge JC & Segal L (2012) Most Australians do not meet recommendations for dairy consumption: finding a new technique to analyse nutrition surveys. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 36: 236-40.

[2] National Health and Medical Research Council, A review of the evidence to address targeted questions to inform the revision of the Australian dietary guidelines, 2011b, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra.

Provided by University of South Australia

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