

Dairy shown to improve bone health of Kiwi children

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New research shows that the Fonterra Milk for Schools programme has improved the proportion of children achieving the recommended number of serves of dairy on weekdays by 12 per cent. Credit: Fonterra

New Massey University research shows children drinking milk at school

have greater increases in the size and strength of their bones, compared to children who are not involved in the Fonterra Milk for Schools programme.

The study, led by Professor Marlena Kruger from the School of Food and Nutrition, followed 118 children in Manawatū participating in Fonterra's Milk for Schools programme. The research was carried out over a year, and involved children aged 5-10 years old.

The study, entitled "The possible role of [milk](#) in modulating body composition and [bone health](#) among pre-pubertal children" examined linear growth, body composition and [bone](#) mineral status by looking at a number of physical attributes from [bone mineral](#) content to height, weight and waist circumference measures. In addition, all of the children completed a food frequency questionnaire to record their dairy food intake, as well as dietary preferences.

The study found that while the children who regularly drink milk as part of the programme grew at the same rate as children not in the programme (i.e. the same increase in weight and height), they had significantly improved bone health when compared to a control group recruited from schools that do not participate in the programme.

Professor Kruger presented her findings at the Australian and New Zealand Bone Mineral Society conference in Brisbane yesterday. "These findings emphasise the importance of milk and dairy for growth and development in children, by providing calcium and many other important nutrients. This was a really positive outcome, however it was a relatively small study. The results need to be confirmed by a larger and longer term study," she says.

The study shows that Fonterra Milk for Schools has improved the proportion of children (12 per cent) achieving the recommended number

of serves of dairy on weekdays.

Fonterra's General Manager of Nutrition, Angela Rowan, says the positive influence Fonterra Milk for Schools is having on children is clear.

"Providing kids with a daily source of nutrition is not only the right thing to do, we can now clearly see the positive impact it's having on their lives. Fonterra Milk for Schools helps kids get a taste for milk and an understanding of the importance of dairy nutrition, resulting in positive choices around what they are drinking.

"For me, it's great to know these [children](#) are growing up with better bone health and with a better understanding of the importance of good nutrition, than previous generations," she says.

Provided by Massey University

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