

Quinn on Nutrition: What is A2 milk?

September 17 2019, by Barbara Quinn



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At a recent nutrition seminar, my friend, Kristin (another registered dietitian) and I were intrigued to hear an update about a new product on the market called A2 milk.

"My cousin has been intolerant to [milk](#) most of her life" she told our group. "But she found she can tolerate A2 milk ... so much so that she

bought an A2 cow!"

Ok, so what is this new milk we can now find in the supermarket? Here's what I've learned:

It is real milk from real cows. And it has the very same nutrient value of regular cow's milk. The difference in A2 lies in some of the genetically determined proteins it contains.

Milk—any milk—contains an array of different types of proteins. One is called beta casein which makes up about 30 percent of all the [protein](#) in milk. Beta casein comes in two main genetic varieties called A1 and A2.

According to some [preliminary research](#), each of these types of protein may have different effects on the body. Some studies have found, for instance, that A1 milk may cause more internal inflammation than A2 varieties.

Which mammals produce A1 or A2 or a combination of both depends on the genetics of the particular breed. Humans, sheep, goats and buffalo only produce A2 milk, for example. Cattle produce A1 or A2, depending on their genetic makeup. Milk from many of the common breeds of dairy cattle is a mixture of A1 and A2 proteins.

And this is what is interesting: Some people who get stomach upsets when they drink milk—like Kristin's cousin—have been found to tolerate A2 milk.

Before we all jump on the A2 bandwagon, remember these facts, say experts: Because A2 milk is still 100% milk, it still contains lactose (milk sugar) and milk proteins. So while some people who's tummies cannot handle regular milk can tolerate A2 milk, those with a true lactose intolerance or milk allergy may not tolerate it any better than

regular milk. Check with your health care provider.

If you already enjoy a variety of milk, yogurt and other dairy products with no problems, switching to A2 milk might not create any added benefit. (It is a bit more expensive, I found.)

Animal breeding and genetics experts are just beginning to explore the differences between A2 milk and other types of dairy foods. At this point in time, some people who have a tough time with regular milk may find A2 easier on the tummy. Stay tuned.

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