

# Whole fat or low-fat milk better for kids? It may make no difference to their health: study

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A world-first study from Edith Cowan University (ECU) has found whole fat milk is just as good for kids as low fat.

The research, published by the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* today, suggests current public health advice recommending [children](#) over the age of two consume low fat [dairy](#) products may need to be revised.

ECU's Associate Professor Therese O'Sullivan led the investigation into the consumption of full-fat dairy products in children as part of the Milky Way study.

Over a three-month period, 49 healthy children aged four to six were randomly allocated to receive either whole fat or low-fat dairy products in place of their normal dairy intake.

Dairy products were home delivered every fortnight in plain packaging at no cost to the participants, to ensure purchase price wasn't a factor.

Neither group knew whether they were consuming whole fat or low-fat dairy, while any left over products were weighed each fortnight to assess the children's overall intake.

## **No health changes**

For the first time, researchers comprehensively measured the children's obesity, body composition, [blood pressure](#), and blood biomarkers to monitor the effects of their dairy consumption.

Regardless of whether they were consuming whole fat or low-fat dairy, both groups of children took in similar amounts of calories.

Although children consuming low-fat dairy took in less calories and fat from dairy, they naturally turned to other foods and drinks to make up this difference.

Professor O'Sullivan said the findings showed no significant differences

between the groups' obesity or cardiovascular health.

"It had previously been thought young children would benefit from low fat dairy products due to their lower levels of saturated fats and lower density of energy, in turn helping avoid obesity and risk of associated cardiometabolic diseases," she said.

"Our results suggest healthy children can safely consume whole fat dairy products without increased obesity or adverse cardiometabolic effects.

"With consideration of our results and previous research, future revisions of dietary guidelines should consider recommending children aged two and over can consume either whole fat or reduced fat dairy."

Dietitian and Ph.D. candidate on the study Analise Nicholl said this would make life easier for parents.

"This evidence-based approach would help simplify parents' dairy choices and allow children to consume dairy according to their individual preference."

"Whole-fat [dairy products](#) do not adversely affect adiposity or cardiometabolic risk factors in children in the Milky Way Study: a double-blind randomized controlled pilot study" was published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

**More information:** Analise Nicholl et al, Whole-fat dairy products do not adversely affect adiposity or cardiometabolic risk factors in children in the Milky Way Study: a double-blind randomized controlled pilot study, *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2021). [DOI: 10.1093/ajcn/nqab288](https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/nqab288)

Provided by Edith Cowan University

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