

Children's milk drinking habits analysed

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The Ministry of Health recommends children drink two to three serves of preferably reduced-fat milk after the age of two years, but new research shows the majority of toddlers are drinking full-fat milk. Credit: Massey University

New research shows a direct relationship between the consumption of cow's milk, and socio-demographic factors.

The *New Zealand Medical Journal* has today published a paper titled Type of cows' [milk consumption](#) and relationship to health predictors in New Zealand [preschool children](#).

The study, a first of its kind in New Zealand, shows cow's milk is consumed regularly by 88 per cent of preschool [children](#). Of these, 26 per cent consumed low or reduced-fat milk, while 74 per cent drank full-fat milk. The data was drawn from a cross-sectional study of 1,329 preschool children between two to five years old, between August and October 2012.

The researchers say while it is important to note the research is now five years old, to the best of their knowledge it remains the latest nationwide investigation of milk consumption patterns in New Zealand preschoolers.

Associate Professor Pamela von Hurst from Massey's School of Sport, Exercise and Nutrition, says the New Zealand Ministry of Health recommends children drink two to three serves of preferably reduced-fat milk after the age of two years. "We found that most children drank cows' milk, but that the majority drank full-fat milk. Consumption of low or reduced-fat milk was influenced by several socio-demographic factors, including age, maternal education, ethnicity and residential region, with M?ori and Pasifika children, and those living in the South Island, more likely to drink full-fat milk.

"Younger children often drink a lot of milk, so drinking fat-reduced milk not only lowers their intake of saturated fat, but also total energy. At the same time, fat-reduced milk has more protein and calcium than full-fat milk. For these reasons, fat-reduced milk can be a better option for the whole family," Dr. von Hurst says.

"Identification of the factors which influence milk type consumption in children provides guidance for targeted interventions to improve milk consumption behaviours in children. Further research is warranted to investigate parents/caregivers' knowledge about dietary guidelines and to determine the causal relationship between obesity and milk type consumption. The findings of this study may have important implications for developing and shaping interventions and in helping shape public health policy and practice to promote cow's [milk consumption](#) in preschool children."

More information: Type of cows' milk consumption and relationship to health predictors in New Zealand preschool children. www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-t...19-january-2018/7465

Provided by Massey University

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