

## Is Eating Dairy Products a Healthy Option for Adults?

Mable Everette, DrPH, Registered Dietitian

Dairy products are a major contributor of calcium and vitamin D to one's meal plan. Although various foods contain calcium, milk and dairy products are considered the best sources because of their vitamin D and lactose content that promote calcium absorption. The recommended serving of milk is 3 cups or its equivalent on a daily basis for adults.

Calcium, the most abundant mineral in the body, is vital to life. Calcium in the bone is important for bone structure and serves as a calcium bank for the body. Calcium in the body's fluids help to regulate muscle contractions, nerve impulses, blood clotting, and other processes. Adequate calcium intake during the growing years is essential to achieving optimal bone mass and protection from osteoporosis in later life,

Topics in the news related to calcium are lactose intolerance and osteoporosis.

1. Lactose intolerance means that one is not able to fully digest the milk sugar (lactose) in dairy products. Milk products that may be more tolerable include yogurt, cottage cheese, cheese and lactose free dairy products.
2. Osteoporosis is a disease characterized by a decrease in total bone mass and deterioration of bone tissue which leads to increased bone fragility and risk of fracture. Although osteoporosis manifests itself in older adults, the process actually begins much earlier in life. The peak period for calcium retention-and, therefore, the period during which measures to prevent osteoporosis is between 4 and 20 years of age. The low-calcium, high soft drink intake of many in the 4 to 20 age group may increase the risk for osteoporosis.

Excerpted from "Evolution of Family Health including 20 commonly asked questions Food, Nutrition & Health Questions."

Available: [www.cnesinc.org](http://www.cnesinc.org)