

## Nurses Notes on Nutrition

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The **Milk Group** of the Food Guide Pyramid is one of my favorites! Most of this information I gathered from visiting [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). There is a lot to learn from this website about proper diet and ideas for healthy eating. (To calculate the amount of food and calories for your family recommended by MyPyramid, go to [www.zip4twens.com](http://www.zip4twens.com) and click on the *Calculation Station*.)

**Milk** group foods provide you with vital nutrients needed for health and maintenance of the body. The nutrients include potassium, calcium, vitamin D, protein, riboflavin and vitamin B12. During childhood and adolescence, bone mass is being built and milk products are essential for proper bone development and health. Building bone mass may reduce the risk of osteoporosis. (softening, deterioration, or loss of bone mass.)

2 to 3 cups daily is recommended. One cup is generally 1 cup milk or yogurt, or 1 and a half ounces of natural cheese or 2 oz. of processed cheese. One scoop of ice cream is 1/3 cup of milk!

It is best to drink/eat low-fat or fat free milk products. This cuts down on the saturated fats and cholesterol that lead to coronary heart disease and it also cuts down on calories. Low-fat products have the same amount of vitamins and minerals but a lower percentage of fat.

### **A bit on the main nutrients of the Milk food group:**

**Calcium** is needed to build bones and teeth and maintain bone mass. Bone health begins at a young age, and calcium in the diet along with weight bearing activities can't be stressed enough to prevent osteoporosis. You can also get calcium from calcium-fortified foods. Foods that are made from milk but have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream and butter are not part of the food group. If you don't like milk, you can get calcium from canned fish, soy products, some leafy greens, or calcium fortified cereals, juices, breads and soy or rice beverages.

**Potassium** helps to maintain a healthy blood pressure and is a vital for heart function. Milk products, especially yogurt and fluid milk, provide potassium.

**Vitamin D** functions to keep the proper levels of calcium and phosphorous in the body which helps to build and maintain bones. Milk, yogurt and cereals fortified with Vitamin D are a good source of this nutrient.

If you are lactose intolerant, choose lactose free milk, cheese or yogurt; or consume the enzyme lactase prior to consuming milk products.

Some yummy milk products are: puddings, frozen yogurt, yogurt dips, fruit-yogurt smoothies, flavored milks, ice cream and cheese sauces.

Thanks, and stay healthy with the **Milk Food Group** and make sure you always "GOT MILK!"

(Sources: [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) ; Fitness and Wellness, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed., W. Hoeger and S. Hoeger, 2005)