

YOGURT: 10 REASONS YOGURT IS A TOP HEALTH FOOD

1. Yogurt is easier to digest than milk. Many people who cannot tolerate milk, either because of a protein allergy or lactose intolerance, can enjoy yogurt. The culturing process makes yogurt more digestible than milk. The live active cultures create lactase, the enzyme lactose-intolerant people lack, and another enzyme contained in some yogurts (beta-galactosidase) also helps improve lactose absorption in lactase-deficient persons. Bacterial enzymes created by the culturing process, partially digest the milk protein casein, making it easier to absorb and less allergenic. In our pediatric practice, we have observed that children who cannot tolerate milk can often eat yogurt without any intestinal upset. While the amount varies among brands of yogurt, in general, yogurt has less lactose than milk. The culturing process has already broken down the milk sugar lactose into glucose and galactose, two sugars that are easily absorbed by lactose-intolerant persons.

2. Yogurt contributes to colon health. There's a medical truism that states: "You're only as healthy as your colon." When eating yogurt, you care for your colon in two ways. First, yogurt contains lactobacteria, intestines-friendly bacterial cultures that foster a healthy colon, and even lower the risk of colon cancer. Lactobacteria, especially acidophilus, promotes the growth of healthy bacteria in the colon and reduces the conversion of bile into carcinogenic bile acids. The more of these intestines-friendly bacteria that are present in your colon, the lower the chance of colon diseases. Basically, the friendly bacteria in yogurt seems to deactivate harmful substances (such as nitrates and nitrites before they are converted to nitrosamines) before they can become carcinogenic.

Secondly, yogurt is a rich source of calcium - a mineral that contributes to colon health and decreases the risk of colon cancer. Calcium discourages excess growth of the cells lining the colon, which can place a person at high risk for colon cancer. Calcium also binds cancer-producing bile acids and keeps them from irritating the colon wall. People that have diets high in calcium (e.g. Scandinavian countries) have lower rates of colorectal cancer. One study showed that an average intake of 1,200 milligrams of calcium a day is associated with a 75 percent reduction of colorectal cancer. As a survivor of colon cancer, I have a critical interest in the care of my colon. My life depends on it.

3. Yogurt improves the bioavailability of other nutrients. Culturing of yogurt increases the absorption of calcium and B-vitamins. The lactic acid in the yogurt aids in the digestion of the milk calcium, making it easier to absorb.

4. Yogurt can boost immunity. Researchers who studied 68 people who ate two cups of live-culture yogurt daily for three months found that these persons produced higher levels of immunity boosting interferon. The bacterial cultures in yogurt have also been shown to stimulate infection-fighting white cells in the bloodstream. Some studies have shown yogurt cultures to contain a factor that has anti-tumor effects in experimental animals.

NUTRITIP: Yogurt - Good for Young and Old: Yogurt is a valuable health food for both infants and elderly persons. For children, it is a balanced source of protein, fats, carbohydrates, and minerals in a texture that kids love. For senior citizens, who usually have more sensitive colons or whose intestines have run out of lactase, yogurt is also a valuable food. Elderly intestines showed declining levels of bifidus bacteria, which allow the growth of toxin-producing and, perhaps, cancer-causing bacteria.

5. Yogurt aids healing after intestinal infections. Some viral and allergic gastrointestinal disorders injure the lining of the intestines, especially the cells that produce lactase. This results in temporary lactose malabsorption problems. This is why children often cannot tolerate milk for a month or two after an intestinal infection. Yogurt, however, because it contains less lactose and more lactase, is usually well-tolerated by healing intestines and is a popular "healing food" for diarrhea. Many pediatricians recommend yogurt for children suffering from various forms of indigestion. Research shows that children recover faster from diarrhea when eating yogurt. It's good to eat yogurt while taking antibiotics. The yogurt will minimize the effects of the antibiotic on the friendly bacteria in the intestines. A 1999 study reported in *Pediatrics* showed that lactobacillus organisms can reduce antibiotic-associated diarrhea.

NUTRITIP: Yogurt - A Chaser for Antibiotics: Antibiotics kill not only harmful bacteria; they also kill the healthy ones in the intestines. The live bacterial cultures in yogurt can help replenish the intestines with helpful bacteria before the harmful ones take over. I usually "prescribe" a daily dose of yogurt while a person is taking antibiotics and for two weeks thereafter.

6. Yogurt can decrease yeast infections. Research has shown that eating eight ounces of yogurt that contains live and active cultures daily reduces the amount of yeast colonies in the vagina and decreases the incidence of vaginal yeast infections.

7. Yogurt is a rich source of calcium. An 8-ounce serving of most yogurts provides 450 mg. of calcium, one-half of a child's RDA and 30 to 40 percent of the adult RDA for calcium. Because the live-active cultures in yogurt increase the absorption of calcium, an 8-ounce serving of yogurt gets more calcium into the body than the same volume of milk can.

8. Yogurt is an excellent source of protein. Plain yogurt contains around ten to fourteen grams of protein per eight ounces, which amounts to twenty percent of the daily protein requirement for most persons. In fact, eight ounces of yogurt that contains live and active cultures, contains 20 percent more protein than the same volume of milk (10 grams versus 8 grams). Besides being a rich source of proteins, the culturing of the milk proteins during fermentation makes these proteins easier to digest. For this reason, the proteins in yogurt are often called "predigested."

9. Yogurt can lower cholesterol. There are a few studies that have shown that yogurt can reduce the blood cholesterol. This may be because the live cultures in yogurt can assimilate the cholesterol or because yogurt binds bile acids, (which has also been shown to lower cholesterol), or both.

10. Yogurt is a "grow food." Two nutritional properties of yogurt may help children with intestinal absorption problems grow: The easier digestibility of the proteins and the fact that the lactic acid in yogurt increases the absorption of minerals. And even most picky-eaters will eat yogurt in dips and smoothies and as a topping. Perhaps we can take a health tip about yogurt cultures from cultures who consume a lot of yogurt, such as the Bulgarians who are noted for their longer lifespan and remain in good health well into old age.

NUTRMYTH: All foods made with yogurt are created equal. Not so. In fact, the yogurt used to coat nibble foods such as raisins, nuts, and fruit bits is often so highly sugared that you're really eating more sugar than yogurt.

HOW TO BUY THE HEALTHIEST YOGURT: 5 TIPS: As when you purchase any food, read the label, both the "Nutritional Facts" panel and the list of ingredients. Look specifically at the following:

1. The best nutritional deal is plain yogurt, which has only two ingredients: live cultures and milk (whole milk, low-fat, or skim). The longer the ingredients list, the more calories you get and the less yogurt nutrition. In some highly-sweetened containers of yogurt, you're getting more calories in the sweetener than you are in the yogurt. Be sure to read the protein and sugar values on the nutrition panel. The higher the protein and the lower the sugar content, the more actual yogurt you're getting in the container. You can make fun flavored yogurts with your kids that please their tastebuds and give you control over the contents of the yogurt.

- ◆ **BEST YOGURT:** Contains only live and active cultures and milk.
- ◆ **OKAY YOGURT:** Contains live and active cultures, milk, and some filler ingredients.
- ◆ **DON'T-EVEN-BUY YOGURT:** If it says "heat treated" on the label. It may contain added sugar and stabilizers - and more!

2. The calcium content. The best yogurts provide 35 to 40 percent of the recommended dietary allowance for calcium in an 8-ounce container. Once the calcium gets below 30 percent of the DV, it's a good bet that the container is filled with a lot of less-nutritious filler.

3. Avoid yogurt that says "heat treated after culturing" on the label. This means that the yogurt was pasteurized after the healthful organisms were added, which dilutes the health benefits of the yogurt. Pasteurization deactivates the lactase and kills the live cultures, thereby obliterating two health benefits of yogurt. Heat-treating yogurt trades economic gain for nutritional loss. It prolongs the shelf life, but spoils its nutrition and health-food value. Lactose-intolerant persons who can tolerate yogurt containing live and active cultures may not be able to digest yogurt that has been heat treated. Yogurt-based salad dressings and yogurt-covered raisins, pretzels, and candy typically do not contain live and active cultures.

The National Yogurt Association has been urging the FDA not to allow products that do not contain live and active cultures to be called "yogurt." **Stonyfield's Organic Yogurts** - the one we recommend - has the highest level of live and active cultures, and it contains inulin.

4. Yogurt terms to watch for. There's a dizzying array of yogurts in the supermarket dairy aisle. Here's a key to the different types.

- ✱ Whole milk yogurt contains approximately 7 grams of milk fat per 8-ounce serving.
- ✱ Lowfat yogurt contains between 1 and 4 grams (0.5% to 2 %) of milk fat per 8-ounce serving.
- ✱ Nonfat yogurt contains less than 1/2 gram (less than 0.5%) of milk fat per 8-ounce serving.
- ✱ In Swiss or custard-style yogurt, fruit and yogurt are mixed together. To insure firmness, a stabilizer, such as gelatin, may be added. This is also called "blended yogurt." Swiss yogurt is fermented in vats and then transferred to cups. This process breaks the gel, so that artificial binders and stabilizers must be added.
- ✱ Fruit-added or plain yogurt has a runnier consistency. The whey, the clear liquid at the top, should be stirred into the solids.
- ✱ Yogurt also comes in liquid form, called "kefir," which may contain added sweeteners such as high fructose corn syrup.

- ✳ **Heat-treated.** Some yogurt manufacturers market "heat-treated yogurt" to prolong shelf life or decrease tartness and produce a more pudding-type texture. While perhaps more appealing to some, the heat treatment of the yogurt after the cultures have been added kills much of the health benefits of the yogurt.

5. The benefits of plain yogurt. Ounce for ounce, plain yogurt is more nutritious than fruit-added preparations. Notice the differences on the labels: If plain yogurt doesn't appeal to you, buy plain yogurt and flavor it with your favorite fruit. This way you control the sweeteners.

- Plain yogurt contains around ½ of the calories of the same amount of fruit-added yogurt.
- Plain yogurt contains almost twice the amount of proteins.
- Plain yogurt contains fewer fillers.
- Plain yogurt contains more calcium.
- Plain yogurt contains no added sugar.

5 WAYS TO USE YOGURT AS A NUTRITIOUS SUBSTITUTE: Yogurt is one of the most versatile foods, especially for children who love dips and toppings. It can be used as a substitute for many high-fat foods. Here are some suggestions.

1. Use yogurt in place of mayonnaise. Non-fat, plain yogurt contains less than ten percent of the calories, less than one percent of the fat, and around three percent of the cholesterol of an equal amount of regular mayonnaise. Combining equal amounts of low-calorie mayonnaise and low fat yogurt works well for many dishes, including potato salad, coleslaw, pasta salad, tuna salad, dips, and appetizers.

2. A favorite with toddlers. Yogurt makes a tasty and nutritious dip for toddlers, who love to dip their exploring fingers into new foods. It is also a favorite topping for toddler foods and a time-honored bait to entice toddlers to try new foods.

3. Try whole plain yogurt as a healthy alternative to sour cream. It is much lower in calories, fat, and cholesterol. If you're adding it to a sauce in place of sour cream, heat it over very low heat so it doesn't curdle. After a while, switch to lowfat.

4. Try yogurt in baking recipes. Plain yogurt can often be substituted for milk, buttermilk, or sour cream in recipes for waffles, pancakes, and muffins.

5. Substitute yogurt for ice cream. Yogurt shakes and smoothies are a low-fat alternative to ice cream.

NUTRIMYTH: Frozen yogurt is always a healthy substitute for regular yogurt. Not all frozen yogurts are created equal. Quality frozen yogurt will have at least 10 million live and active cultures (LAC) seal. The LAC seal signifies that the frozen yogurt has at least that amount of live and active cultures. While it has less live and active cultures than regular yogurt, frozen yogurt is still a good source of live and active cultures, calcium, and a delicious hot weather treat.

SIX HEALTH BENEFITS OF LACTOBACTERIA: Healthy bacteria reside in everybody's colon, and in return for food and a warm place to live these resident bacteria contribute to your health. One of the most intestinal-friendly resident bacteria is the family of lactobacteria, so-called because they thrive on lactose sugars. The resident germ you will read most about is

L. acidophilus, which means "acid-loving," because these organisms grow best in an acidic intestinal environment. Here are some healthy things these bacteria do for your body:

- 1. Improves digestion.** Lactobacteria, as the name implies, help digest the lactose in dairy products, preventing lactose overload, and lessening problems with lactose intolerance. Lactobacteria also help with the absorption of valuable nutrients and stimulate peristalsis, the movement of food through the intestines that leads to regular bowel movements.
- 2. Manufactures vitamins.** Like rich soil grows vitamin-rich foods, lactobacteria produce B-complex vitamins, along with vitamin K.
- 3. Manufactures nutrients.** Friendly bacteria help manufacture essential fatty acids called short chain fatty acids (SCFA). These are valuable nutrients for intestinal cells and also produce cancer-fighting substances.
- 4. Boosts immunity.** Lactobacteria inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria and fungi, such as candida (yeast). They help keep the intestinal environment acidic and compete with harmful bacteria and the toxins they produce. They even produce hydrogen peroxide, which has a natural antibiotic effect.
- 5. Protects against carcinogens.** Lactobacteria bind potential carcinogens, preventing them from damaging cells. *L. bulgaricus*, the main lactobacillus used in yogurt, has anti-tumor properties. Specifically, lactobacteria bind heavy metals and bile acids, which are potential carcinogens. These bacteria inhibit the growth of nitrate-producing bacteria (nitrates can be a carcinogen). They also metabolize flavanoids, producing natural anti-tumor substances.
- 6. Protects against cardiovascular disease.** Lactobacteria help regulate cholesterol and tryglyceride levels in the blood.

Be kind to the bugs in your bowels. They do good things for you.

NUTRITIP: YOGURT FOR BREAKFAST: A nutriperk in yogurt could theoretically improve school performance by perking up the brain. Yogurt is relatively high in the amino acid tyrosine (a neurostimulant) and low in the amino acid tryptophan (a neurosedative). Add yogurt to other brain foods, such as flax oil (for brain-building fatty acids) and soy foods (for protein and blood-sugar stabilization), and you have three synergistic foods that form the basic ingredients for our School-Ade recipe. We have personally felt the effects of this nutriperk by drinking a smoothie with these three basic ingredients each morning before we go to work. William Sears, MD and Martha Sears, RN

SCHOOL-ADE: A BREAKFAST-ON-THE-RUN SMOOTHIE

- 3 cups milk or soy beverage
- 1½ cups plain nonfat yogurt
- 1-2 servings [Juice Plus+® Complete](#) or similar multivitamin supplement
- one banana
- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- 1/2 cup each of your favorite fruits
- 2 tbsp. flax oil or 1/2 cup flaxseed meal
- 4 ounces tofu
- 2 tbsp. peanut butter (optional)
- 1 tbsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 avocado

Combine all the ingredients and blend until smooth. Serve immediately after blending while the mixture still has a bubbly milkshake-like consistency.