

FUELING WITH DAIRY

WHAT ARE DAIRY FOODS?

Dairy foods include milk, cheese, and yogurt. They provide your body nutrients including calcium, vitamin D, potassium, B vitamins, high-quality protein, and more. In fact, milk actually provides 13 essential nutrients that are necessary for overall health, growth and development.

WHY DO YOU NEED DAIRY FOODS?

Dairy foods, specifically milk, provide three nutrients of concern for Americans: calcium, vitamin D and potassium. Calcium and vitamin D are especially relevant given that adolescents have an increased need for these to support the accrual of bone mass.

Milk contains both casein and whey proteins, with whey protein being quick to digest and often the protein focused on for the post-workout window. Its branch chain amino acids, specifically leucine, helps “jumpstart” the muscle resynthesis process after exercise. Research has shown that the consumption of dairy protein after resistance exercise is effective in increasing muscle strength. To date, dairy proteins seem to be superior to other tested proteins post-exercise, largely due to their leucine content and the digestion and absorptive kinetics of branched-chain amino acids found in fluid-based dairy foods.

HOW MUCH DAIRY DO YOU NEED?

Athletes over nine years of age should consume three servings of dairy foods per day. More can be consumed, but the baseline daily requirement is three servings to provide the nutrients needed to build and maintain strong bones and teeth.

A serving of a dairy food is defined as:

- 1 cup milk or calcium-fortified soy milk
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 ½ ounces natural cheese (3 or 4 dice)

HOW DO YOU SHAPE AN ATHLETE'S PLATE WITH DAIRY FOODS?

Ideally, you should consume one serving of dairy at each of their three main meals to ensure adequate intake: breakfast, lunch and dinner. That can be as simple as drinking a cup of milk with each meal or putting one and one-half ounces of cheese on a sandwich or burger.

Snacks can also be a fantastic opportunity to get a serving of dairy foods. Nutrient-rich snack examples that fuel you with carbohydrate and protein include:

- 1 cup milk as part of a fruit smoothie
- 1 cup yogurt with berries and whole grain granola
- 1 cup plain yogurt made into a Ranch dip for veggies and whole grain pita chips
- 1 ½ ounces natural cheese and whole grain crackers
- Whole wheat tortilla with 1 ½ ounces natural cheese (or ⅓ cup grated cheese) warmed as a quesadilla

Post-workout, milk and yogurt can provide the high-quality protein needed to promote muscle repair and recovery. One cup milk and one cup yogurt combined with fruit in a smoothie can easily provide the 15-25 grams of protein recommended post-exercise, as well as carbohydrate to replenish energy stores.