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DAIRY Nutrition Digest

SCIENTIFIC NEWSLETTER ON NUTRITION AND HEALTH

The «*Dairy Nutrition Digest*» is EDA's quarterly scientific newsletter providing the latest science-based information on dairy-related nutrition and health topics. Scientific articles are summarized in user friendly language for a broad audience.

Qualifying nutrients are perceived as more important than disqualifying nutrients

European consumers place a high importance on the nutritional value of foods. Qualifying nutrients are perceived as more important than disqualifying nutrients. Perceived importance of disqualifying nutrients varies more across consumer groups. Communication about both disqualifying and qualifying nutrients is proposed.

A recent study from the University of Ghent found that qualifying nutrients are perceived as more important than disqualifying nutrients when selecting food products. A consumer survey was carried out with almost 5000 people aged between 20-70 years in Belgium, France, Italy, Norway, Poland and Spain. The results showed that qualifying nutrients such as fibre, vitamins and minerals are perceived as more important than the disqualifying nutrients energy, saturated fat, fat, salt and sugars. The researchers also found that women, older respondents, dieters and health-conscious consumers put even more importance on qualifying nutrients than did other respondents.

When discussing implications for nutrition policy makers and food industries, the authors remarked that the findings will be useful to food manufacturers and governments as they work to decide what information should be included on food labels. A recommendation arising from this research is to balance the information of disqualifying and qualifying nutrients in communication strategies. In this context it is positive to see that EU policy makers working on the new EU food labeling rules have included protein in the mandatory nutrition declaration to provide more complete information about the nutritional composition of foods such as dairy products.

Consumer perception and behaviour related to food labelling. Hoefkens C, Verbeke W, Van Camp J. Commun Agric Appl Biol Sci. 2011;76(1):89-92.

New review study on weight shows no reason to switch from regular-fat to fat-reduced dairy products

A new systematic review recently published in the journal *Obesity Reviews* concludes that dairy products showed no harmful effect on weight status, both in children and adults. There is no evidence to substantiate the recommendation that a switch to reduced-fat dairy foods will reduce overweight and obesity.

In this review, nineteen studies from the last 30 years on adults and children were included. The authors concluded that "there is currently insufficient evidence to conclude that increased dairy consumption, particularly of regular-fat varieties, is associated with weight status". This means that - contrary to popular belief - low-fat dairy products were not found to be more beneficial to weight status than regular-fat dairy products. Regular-fat dairy foods such as whole milk are under pressure because regular-fat dairy foods contribute saturated fat and energy to the diet. This study adds to a series of recent publications that question whether recommending consumption of low and reduced-fat dairy foods instead of regular-fat dairy foods will reduce obesity levels. On the contrary: this study makes a strong case for maintaining the place of both regular-fat and reduced-fat dairy foods within a healthy and balanced diet, allowing consumers to compose individual diets according to their needs from among the broad variety of dairy products available.

Dairy consumption and overweight and obesity: a systematic review of prospective cohort studies. Louie JC, Flood VM, Hector DJ, Rangan AM, Gill TP. Obes Rev. 2011 Apr 27.

People eat less calcium from dairy when they think they have lactose intolerance

A new study from the US shows that people with self-perceived lactose intolerance consume less calcium from dairy products. Those people had on the other hand a higher rate of diabetes and high blood pressure diagnosed by a doctor. Elimination of dairy foods from the diet has negative effects on nutrient intake and health.

In this study, almost 3500 people aged between 19-70 years were asked to report on their intake of calcium and dairy foods. Dairy products included among others white and chocolate milk, milk on cereal, yoghurt, pudding, ice cream, cheese, cocoa and coffee drinks and a wide variety of foods made with milk or cheese. People with self-perceived lactose intolerance had lower average intake of both calcium and dairy products than people without self-perceived lactose intolerance. The authors noted that the elimination of dairy foods may have adverse effects on nutrient intake and health as dairy foods are important contributors of many nutrients and eating dairy has been linked with higher diet quality, improved bone health, lower blood pressure and body weight and a lower risk for developing diabetes.

Previous studies have shown that people really suffering from lactose intolerance can consume dairy products without problems when consumed with meals. This has also been confirmed by EFSA in its 2010 scientific opinion. EFSA recognized that a high level of lactose from dairy products eaten over a day can in general be tolerated by lactose intolerant people. EFSA also says that dairy consumption is important for nutrient intake and that care should be taken with regard to nutrient deficiency when leaving dairy out from the diet (see 2nd issue 2010). The US National Institutes of Health came to the same conclusions in their consensus statement from 2010.

Self-perceived lactose intolerance results in lower intakes of calcium and dairy foods and is associated with hypertension and diabetes in adults. Nicklas TA, Qu H, Hughes SO, He M, Wagner SE, Foushee HR, Shewchuk RM. Am J Clin Nutr. 2011 Apr 27. National Institutes of Health. Consensus development conference statement, Lactose Intolerance and Health, 2010.

Milk is appropriate for active young people

The American Academy of Paediatrics recently concluded: “Given the current epidemic of childhood overweight and obesity, we recommend the elimination of calorie containing beverages from a well-balanced diet, with the exception of low-fat or fat-free milk, because it contains calcium and vitamin D, which are particularly important for young people”.

The recently published AAP clinical report “Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks for Children and Adolescents: Are They Appropriate?” outlines how these products are being misused (sports drinks and energy drinks are different products), discusses their ingredients, and provides guidance to decrease or eliminate consumption by children and adolescents. The AAP recommends that for generally active young people there is no additional need for carbohydrate (or sugar) containing beverages, other than fruit juice and low-fat milk. Whilst sports drinks may be appropriate during prolonged vigorous intensity, they are not recommended during meals or as snacks and should not replace low-fat milk or water. Low-fat milk was also recommended as a good option for use as a post-exercise protein recovery drink.

Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks for Children and Adolescents: Are They Appropriate? Committee on Nutrition and the Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness, Pediatrics 2011.