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Why Real Men Drink More Milk

Several June celebrations - Father's Day, the first day of summer, and Dairy Month - are opportune times to remember the importance of nutrient-rich dairy foods. Unfortunately for our health, very few of us get the recommended daily servings from the dairy group. A recent report indicated that for adults age 19 to 50, only 16 percent consumed the recommended number of servings. For younger and older folks, the numbers were even worse - as low as 10 percent!

"Men's dairy intake is important for their health and for their family too," says Mike McNamara, secondary prevention specialist with the Cardiovascular Health Program, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) in Helena. "Enjoying low-fat dairy products is a smart nutrition move for the health of your bones and your heart. It is also the best way to model the eating habits you want your children and grandchildren to have as they grow up."

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend 3 cups of fat-free or low-fat milk - or equivalent milk products - per day. Since the recommendations were published in 2005, dozens of additional studies have provided evidence for the health benefits of nutrient-rich dairy foods. Calcium and vitamin D are now emerging as key nutrients in the prevention of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer - in addition to their better-known role in building strong bones and teeth.

As a health professional and father of two, McNamara is convinced about the value of dairy foods. "We always serve low-fat milk with meals at our home." DPHHS dietitians point to these four important reasons to get into a dairy habit.

- **You care about children's health and future well-being:** Whether you're talking nutrition, physical activity, or any other health habit, children and teens look to family members as role models. Celebrate Father's Day (and every day) with a tall glass of refreshing low-fat milk (plain or your favorite flavor) - or a summertime fruit smoothie.
- **You're trying to build muscle mass:** Here's some fitness news that's easy to swallow. Whey protein (a high quality protein from cow's milk and yogurt) in combination with resistance exercise can boost the rate at which your body makes lean muscle. Research suggests that fat-free milk may be one of the most effective sports drinks on the planet.
- **You want to lower your high blood pressure:** Low-fat dairy is an essential component of the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension). A delicious combo of low-fat dairy and 8 to 10 produce servings (fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits/veggies) has repeatedly been confirmed as effective in preventing and treating high blood pressure.
- **You'd like to avoid osteoporosis:** Men are at risk for this bone-thinning disease too, especially if they smoke, have more than three alcoholic drinks daily, have a family history of fractures, and are thin. The path to prevention: Get plenty of calcium, vitamin D, and weight-bearing activity - plus stop smoking and limit alcohol to two drinks or less per day.

"When you want to cool off in summer's heat, rethink your usual drinks," says Mr. McNamara. "Remember that children are watching and enjoy at least three ice-cold glasses of milk every day. It'll be good for them and good for you!"

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