Choose Dairy Foods for Stronger Bones and Teeth

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The Dairy Food Group is a rich source of vitamin D and calcium, which play an important role in developing healthy bones and teeth. It’s especially important to include dairy foods in your diet in the winter when we’re bundled up and don’t get much sun — because sun helps your body make vitamin D. Dairy foods are also good sources of potassium, which helps you maintain a healthy blood pressure.

When selecting dairy products:

- Choose low-fat milk (1%, 2%, or skim), non-fat dry milk, yogurt, and low-fat cheeses (look for “reduced fat” or “low fat” on labels).
- Choose milk and yogurt varieties with no added sugar. Add fresh or canned fruit in its own juices to plain yogurt for sweetness without added sugar. Use flavored milk sparingly.

If you’re lactose-intolerant or allergic to milk:

- Eat non-dairy foods fortified with Vitamin D and/or calcium. Examples include orange juice; soy products, including tofu and soy milk; almond and rice milk; breakfast cereals; and breads. Check labels!
- Eat green, leafy vegetables for calcium. Kale, bok choy, and spinach are good choices.

How much?

- Children 2-3 years old need 2 cups of dairy foods daily.
- Children 4-8 years old need 2½ cups daily.
- Children and teens 9-18 years old need 3 cups daily.
- Moms, dads, and all other adults age 19 and older need 3 cups daily.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture (2016), All about the dairy group; retrieved from http://www.choosemyplate.gov/dairy

Physical Activity Corner

Strong bones are important for lifelong health and you can make them stronger by getting as much physical activity as possible. The most effective way to strengthen bones is to do weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, running, jumping, skipping, handstands, trampoline, and yoga.