

## **Dairy foods could reduce healthcare costs by billions**

Dairy products, including yogurt, play an important role in disease prevention and could save national healthcare systems billions of euros if consumers ate more of them, according to an expert on the role of nutrients and health.

Dr David McCarron told the 1<sup>st</sup> Global Summit on the Health Effects of Yogurt that dairy products offer nutritional quality at relatively low cost, with research supporting their association with reduced risk of obesity, heart disease, stroke, raised blood pressure, cancer, kidney problems and diabetes as well as better bone health.

He said that yogurt is an essential component of dairy's health benefits with the added appeal that it is widely available, affordable and comes in a wide range of flavours.

'One of the challenges that the nutrition community faces is standing up and trying to inform the public and our leaders that if we could implement a strategy of increasing dairy consumption worldwide, it could lead to dramatic healthcare savings,' said Dr McCarron.

'Yogurt specifically can be tied to major health benefits and by increasing its consumption we have an opportunity to dramatically improve healthcare at remarkably low cost,' he added.

## **Longer life**

Studies have repeatedly shown that people who have a healthy diet consisting of dairy products, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and protein-rich foods such as lean meats, poultry, fish and eggs, live longer compared with people who have a nutritionally poor diet that relies more on alcohol, carbonated beverages, particularly sugar sweetened, total fat and refined grain.

'All-cause mortality is reduced by 25% with a good quality diet. I don't know of a drug on the market that can do that,' said Dr

McCarron, who is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Nutrition, University of California, Davis, USA.

He cited studies showing that dairy foods helped prevent weight gain, glucose intolerance and cancers. In particular, they reduced the chances of high blood pressure by 40%, diabetes by 30%, bladder cancer by 40% and colon cancer by 35%.

### Healthier from birth

Dairy foods are also linked with improved maternal and infant health, and if you're born bigger and have a healthier mum, you live longer and have a lower burden of chronic disease, said Dr McCarron.

If everyone ate more dairy products the associated reductions in disease burden would lead to massive savings in healthcare costs, 'almost so big that you look at it and say it's in a fairytale category, but it isn't,' said Dr McCarron.

Standard guidelines for many European countries recommend three portions a day of dairy products such as yoghurt to maintain good health.

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