

## Yogurt: a valuable tool for improving children's health

"Frequent yogurt consumption may contribute to improved diet quality and a healthier insulin profile in children." *Zhu Y et al 2015<sup>1</sup>*

"In the HELENA study of adolescents in Europe, an inverse association was observed between consumption of yogurt and of milk- and yogurt-based beverages and some cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors, especially total and abdominal excess body fat." *Moreno LA et al 2015<sup>2</sup>*

"Encouraging teenagers to increase their consumption of yogurt could help meet recommended intakes for several micronutrients particularly calcium and iodine, which are in short supply in many adolescent diets." *Williams EB et al 2015<sup>3</sup>*

### Yogurt is a marker of a healthy diet

Yogurt is a high-nutrient and low-energy food. There is evidence that children and adolescents who eat yogurt regularly (at least once a week) have a healthier diet than infrequent yogurt consumers:

- Overall, yogurt consumers have a **higher Healthy Eating Index score** (50.56 vs 48.52).<sup>1</sup>
- In NHANES<sup>3</sup>, the children who were frequent yogurt consumers ate **23% more fruit** and **29.6% more whole grains** than the infrequent yogurt consumers.<sup>1</sup>
- Yogurt consumers (aged 8-18 years) have **higher intakes of calcium, vitamin D, and potassium** than non-yogurt consumers.<sup>4</sup> Yogurt is also a dietary source for children of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, riboflavin, iodine, and phosphorus.<sup>3</sup>
- Unlike general dairy consumption, yogurt is associated with **lower saturated fat intake** (10.9% of daily energy intake among yogurt consumers vs 11.7% in non-yogurt consumers).<sup>4</sup>
- **Adding an extra pot (125 g) of low-fat fruit yogurt per day can make up for nutrient shortfalls** in the adolescent diet, increasing mean intakes from below to above RNI of calcium, zinc (both genders), and iodine (older girls).<sup>3</sup>

### Yogurt makes only a small contribution to children's sugar intakes

Sweetened foods are often preferred by children who are more likely to eat them as a result. Concerns that sweetened dairy foods are contributing to exceeding sugar intakes are apparently a misconception:

- In US children, consuming **sweetened dairy products increases the number of dairy servings consumed** by 6-17 year-olds and has a positive impact on their diet quality, whereas sugary drinks and sweets have a negative impact.<sup>5,6</sup>
- While more than 50% of total sugars and 66% of added sugars or NMES<sup>9</sup> in children's diets come from sweet products (cakes, sweets, etc.) and drinks, **yogurt accounts for only 1-8% of total sugars and 4-9% of added or NME sugar**.<sup>7</sup>
- **Increased consumption of low sugar dairy foods, especially yogurt, at snack times could increase intake of important micronutrients** without contributing to dietary excesses.<sup>8</sup>

### Yogurt may have important benefits for children's health, including reducing obesity and cardiovascular risk

Dairy consumption is associated with a lower risk of childhood overweight/obesity.<sup>9</sup> A 3-year follow up of children and adolescents found that with each 1 serving/day increment in dairy consumption, body fat fell by 0.65%, and the risk of overweight/obesity was 13% lower.<sup>9</sup> Similar results are being found more specifically with yogurt consumption:

- In NHANES, **children aged 8-18 years who ate yogurt were slimmer** (adjusted mean waist circumference among yogurt-eaters was 74.5 cm vs 77 cm in non-consumers), **had a lower BMI** (21.3 kg/m<sup>2</sup> vs 22 mg/m<sup>2</sup>) **and less body fat** (subscapular skinfold 11.3 cm vs 12.9 cm) than those who did not.<sup>4</sup>
- Similarly, the HELENA<sup>c</sup> study of European adolescents found an **inverse association between consumption of yogurt and some CVD risk factors**, especially total and abdominal excess body fat.<sup>2</sup>
- Furthermore, frequent yogurt consumption (more than once a week) is associated with an **improved insulin profile** in children and teenagers: a lower fasting insulin level, lower insulin resistance, and higher insulin sensitivity.<sup>1</sup>
- Yogurt consumption also **protects against tooth erosion** in children and adolescents, whereas carbonated drinks, fruit juices and sweets increase tooth erosion.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>a</sup>NHANES = National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey; <sup>b</sup>NMES = non-milk extrinsic sugars; <sup>c</sup>HELENA = Healthy Lifestyle in Europe by Nutrition in Adolescence

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