

Got Choices?

A Guide to Non-Dairy Milks

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Cow vs. Alternative Milks

The popularity of alternative milks is on the rise, and so is the confusion about which option is the healthiest. Non-dairy milks are a good choice if you or your child have food allergies, food intolerances, or simply prefer the taste.

Read on to find the best option for you.

Is cow milk unhealthy?

No. However, if you drink cow milk, choose a non-fat or 1% option. You'll get the same important nutrients and avoid excess fat and calories. In fact, cow milk packages nutrients in a way that your body absorbs best.

An 8-oz. glass of 1% cow milk provides:

- 28% of your daily value of calcium
- 8 grams of protein
- Nutrients such as vitamin D and potassium

See the following pages for nutritional information for skim and whole cow milk, as well as most popular alternative milks.

Can I replace my breastmilk with cow milk?

No. Cow milk and non-dairy milks should not replace breastmilk or infant formula, and should never be given to your child if they are under the age of one year.

What is lactose?

Lactose is milk's natural form of sugar which enhances your calcium absorption. This means you'll absorb more calcium from a glass of milk than you would from a supplement containing the same amount of calcium. If you are lactose-intolerant, you can still drink certain milks. Lactaid is real milk that has had the lactose removed and replaced with a different form of sugar.

What to look for in non-dairy milks?

Look for pasteurized milks only that have higher levels of protein, lower or no added sugars, and added vitamins and minerals that compare well to cow's milk (about 30 percent daily value of calcium and 25% daily value of vitamin D per cup).

Questions about non-dairy milks?

- Call Kaiser Permanente Nutrition Services at **303-614-1070** and ask to speak to a dietitian.
- Visit **vrg.org** and search "alternative milks."
- Visit **kphealthyme.org** for more information.

Alternative Milks

ALTERNATIVE MILKS

Pea protein

Pea protein milks are similar to cow milk with adequate protein. Most are vegan and do not contain high allergenic foods.

- 8 g plant-based protein per serving
- Adequate calcium and vitamin D
- Some add DHA omega-3s (usually algal oil)
- Contains iron
- Brand example: Ripple Pea Milk

Soy

Soy milk is most similar to cow milk in calories, fat, and protein. Recent research suggests a moderate amount of soy has health advantages.

A reasonable amount of soy seems to be 2-3 servings a day. Soy allergies are more common in young children than adults. If you or your child has soy allergies, you should shop around for another non-dairy milk.

From an 8-oz. glass of fortified soymilk you get:

- Calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B12
- 6 grams of soy protein
- 80% less fat than whole milk
- Isoflavones that have been shown to modestly decrease LDL (bad) cholesterol levels
- Few brands contain algae-derived docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), which is usually found in fish oils
- Phytates, which can make calcium less absorbable

Goat milk

Goat milk is a limited lactose option that is very similar to whole cow milk in amount of protein, sugars, vitamins, and minerals. It is also easier to digest for sensitive stomachs due to having less lactose (cow milk's natural form of sugar).

If you or your child is allergic to cow milk, do not use goat's milk. Talk to your doctor to see if goat milk is a good option for you. From an 8 oz. glass of goat milk you get:

- More calcium than whole cow's milk
- More potassium than whole cow's milk
- 5% of your daily vitamin C.

NUT AND SEED MILKS

These are a lighter option to cow milk, with fewer calories and less fat than cow milk, vitamin D, and are sometimes fortified with B12. Some examples:

Hemp

These contain alpha-linolenic acid, which humans are able to convert to DHA. Hemp milk also contains calcium, vitamins A, D, E, B12, and has 6 grams of protein per serving.

Almond

These contain a high number of essential vitamins and minerals such as vitamin E, magnesium, iron, fiber, zinc and calcium.

Coconut

Natural coconut milk is creamier and sweeter than canned coconut milk. It contains vitamins D and B12. Unless fortified, coconut milk has very little calcium and protein (about 1 gram per cup). It also contains the same amount of saturated fat as whole cow milk.

Nut and seed milks have very little protein, and many contain added sweeteners like cane or refined sugars. They are also made with a limited total amount of nuts. For instance, a cup of almond milk contains only four almonds.

GRAIN MILKS

These milks are made from grains that have natural fiber and give the added benefit of fiber infused naturally into the milk. They are typically low in fat, and fortified with B12. Examples of grain milks:

Rice

These contain limited or no cholesterol, which makes this non-dairy option good for heart health, but is mainly a source of carbohydrates.

Oat

This option only has half the amount of protein of cow's milk with 4 grams of protein

Grain milks are a good choice for you if you are vegan, or if you or your child have milk protein allergies. However, these milks contain only 1-4 grams of protein, and usually rice syrup, evaporated cane juice, or some other natural sweetener.

Nutritional Information

Nutrition information is per 8-ounce serving of the original flavor. Unless otherwise specified, a 2-3 brand average was used.

Milk	Cal.	Total fat	Sat. fat	Protein	Calcium (mg)	Vitamin D (IU)	Iron (mg)	Comments (% = adult DV)
Cow (skim)	90	0	0	8	300	150	0	
Cow (whole)	146	8	4.5	8	300	150	0	
Soy*	90	3.5	0.5	6	350	150	7.2	B12 (50%), 100-120 kcal if sweetened
Almond*	60	2.5	0	1	200-450	150	0.6	B12 (50%), Vitamin E (30%), 90-120 kcal if sweetened
Rice*	120	2.5	0	1	300	150	0.4	B12 (25%)
Oat	130	2.5	0	4	350	100	0	No B12
Pea protein	100	4.5	0.5	8	450	180	2.7	
Coconut*	50	5	5	1	100	180	0.5	B12 (50%)
Hemp (Living Harvest Tempt)	80	8	1	6	300	150	1	B12 (25%), Riboflavin (50%), Phos (20%). Calories vary by brand.
Goat (low-fat Meyenberg)	89	2.5	1.5	7.5	268	100	0	Vitamin A (500 IU)
Goat (whole Meyenberg)	142	7	4.5	8.5	307	100	0	Vitamin A (315 IU)

*Fortified