

Kicking up the Calcium

Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain ways to “kick up” their daily intake of calcium by adding milk products to foods.
- Students will be able to explain why three cups of low-fat or fat-free milk or an equivalent amount of low-fat yogurt and low-fat cheese is important to their growing bodies.

Materials Needed:

- Paper and pencil
- List of foods (provided in lesson)

Lesson Introduction:

1. Create a list of foods that contain calcium (strawberry-flavored milk, chocolate milk, white milk, drinkable yogurt, squeezable yogurt, flavored yogurt, pudding, American cheese, cheddar cheese, mozzarella cheese, cottage cheese, string cheese, fruit smoothie)
2. Ask students to divide one sheet of paper in half. On one side, write the word **LIKES** and on the other side write **DISLIKES**. Have students then list the foods from the board that they like under the “**LIKES**”, and foods they dislike, under “**DISLIKES**”.
3. After their lists are completed, have students think about ways they could make the foods on the “**DISLIKES**” list more appealing. Suggest combining or adding different foods to make them more enjoyable and to get the benefits from calcium. Combination foods are foods that combine two or more foods from the food groups in MyPyramid. As students are thinking about this, discuss why milk products are so important to their growing bodies. It is important to eat calcium-rich foods throughout their lives for maximum bone health.

Fun facts:

- During childhood and adolescence, the body uses the calcium to build strong bones.
- Bone calcium begins to decrease in young adulthood and progressive loss of bone occurs as we age.
- Teens whose diets do not provide the nutrients to build bones to their maximum potential are at greater risk of developing the bone disease osteoporosis.
- Osteoporosis increases the risk of fractures from weakened bones. Use a cork and a sponge to demonstrate the difference in density between a weakened bone and a healthy bone.
- Calcium plays an important role in muscle contraction, transmitting messages through the nerves, and the release of hormones.
- If blood calcium levels are low, calcium is taken from the bones to ensure normal cell function.

Activity:

1. After the importance of calcium is discussed, bring students back to the activity. Now ask students how they could add milk products to a food or add foods to a milk product to make it more enjoyable. Have students list their suggestions on a separate sheet of paper. Then have students share one of their suggestions with the class. This may spark other ideas. Be careful not to encourage additional calories and saturated fat.



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Ways to Kick Up Your Calcium:

- Sweet Milk Steamer: Microwave a cup of low-fat milk and honey.
- Graham Dunk: Dip a few graham crackers into a cold glass of low-fat milk.
- Fruity Splash: Blend your strawberry milk with fresh bananas and ice.
- Parfait Pleaser: Layer granola and fresh fruit with your favorite low-fat yogurt.
- Honey Fruit Dip: Mix fat-free yogurt with a dollop of honey for a sweet fruit dip.
- Yogurt Pops: Freeze squeezable yogurt for a quick and creamy popsicle.
- Put low-fat cheese in an omelet.
- Add a slice of Swiss or Provolone cheese to sandwiches.
- Eat macaroni and cheese.
- Snack on a fruit and cheese kabob.
- Enjoy salad on a stick (spinach leaves, cheese, cubes, and cherry tomatoes on a stick).
- Use whole-grain, soft-taco shells or tortillas to make burritos or wraps, egg and cheese for breakfast, turkey and cheese for lunch, beans, salsa, and cheese for dinner.
- Create mini-pizzas by topping whole-wheat English muffins or bagels with pizza sauce, low-fat mozzarella cheese, and toppings.
- Serve whole-grain crackers with low-fat cheese.
- Make grilled cheese sandwiches or a piece of cheese appealing by using cookie cutters.
- Enjoy fresh veggies with yogurt dip.
- Top vegetables with low-fat cheese.
- Add fresh fruit to low-fat yogurt.
- Use ice-cold low-fat milk to wash down a couple of graham crackers.

Activity Extension:

Language Arts: Using the activity, have students choose their favorite calcium creation and make a class “Kick Up Your Calcium” book. Have each student type a suggestion, tell one fact about calcium, and draw an illustration. Combine and make one “Kick Up Your Calcium” book for all to share.

Math: Have students take a field trip or assign students to go to the local grocery store to find the products used in their suggestions for the “Kick Up Your Calcium” book. Make a list including price, calories, calcium provided per serving, and fat. Include a price estimation and nutrition value in the book.



*Go low-fat or fat-free when you choose milk, yogurt, and other milk products.
Get 3 cups every day!
(for kids aged 2 to 8, it's 2 cups)*

Ask your BASICS Nutrition Educator about incentive items or stickers to accompany this lesson.