

# 5 Surprising Benefits Of Milk For Children

*As World Milk Day falls on 1 June, we discuss the benefits of milk and what makes it the most wholesome food for your toddler.*



Milk and dairy products play a key role in your child's growth and development. World Milk Day is being celebrated on 1 June every year, since 2001. The main objective of this day is to promote the importance of milk and milk products, across the globe.

## **5 important nutrients of milk**

Milk is a well-accepted and wholesome food and beverage for all age groups. It contains most of the nutrients necessary for the growth and development of your toddler. All the macro- and micro-nutrients are present in an easily digestible and absorbable form in milk. The following key nutrients constitute to the complexity of milk as a wholesome food for your toddler:

## Carbohydrate

The main carbohydrate present in milk is lactose, which is involved in the intestinal absorption of calcium, magnesium and phosphorus, and the utilisation of vitamin D. 100 g of milk contains 4.94 g of carbohydrates.

## Protein

The protein present in cow's milk is of high quality, containing a good balance of all the essential amino acids (which cannot be synthesized by our body) including lysine. Milk proteins possess high biological value which is almost equal to that of meat, eggs and other high quality animal proteins. Milk proteins are valuable supplements to most vegetarian diets. 100 g of milk contains 3.26 g of protein.

## Vitamins

Milk is a good source of B vitamins. If you are a strict vegetarian, then milk is the only source of vitamin B for your child. Significant amounts of riboflavin are present in milk. Riboflavin is necessary for the release of energy from foods and also to maintain the body membranes including skin. It is also crucial for the maintenance of normal vision, red blood cells and functioning of the immune system. Milk and milk products are the main sources of vitamin B12 in the diets of toddlers. Vitamin B12 is required for the maintenance of healthy nerves and red blood cells, energy production and cell division. It carries high significance in your toddler's growth, as it is involved in the functioning of the immune system, neurological and psychological functions and reduction of tiredness and fatigue. The fatty acid composition present in milk serves as a vehicle for important fat-soluble vitamins such as A, D and E.

**To know more about the benefits of milk for your toddler, read this ClipBook.**

## Minerals

**i) Calcium** – Milk is a rich source of bioavailable calcium which helps in the formation and building of strong bones. Calcium is important for blood coagulation, energy yielding metabolism, regulation of cell division and differentiation, muscle, nerve and digestive functions. A 200 ml glass of milk provides your toddler about 40% of his or her calcium requirement per day.

**ii) Phosphorus** – Milk is the main source of phosphorus in your toddler's diet. Phosphorus plays a vital role in the maintenance of healthy bones and teeth. It plays a significant role in cell membrane structure and regulation of your child's basal metabolic rate (BMR).

**iii) Potassium** – Milk is a good source of potassium. Potassium is essential to maintain blood pressure and helps maintain muscular and neurological function.

**iv) Iodine** – Milk is also a good source of the mineral iodine. Iodine is required for the production of thyroid hormones, energy metabolism and maintenance of healthy skin.

## What is the quantity to be consumed according to age?

The Indian Council of Medical Research (2010) recommends a daily calcium intake of 600 mg/day for children aged 1 to 9 years and 800 mg/day for children aged 10 to 17 years. It also recommends feeding 100 ml (standard portion size) of milk and milk products as 5 portions per day for children aged 1 to 18 years, as part of their balanced diet. 100 ml of cow milk contains 118 mg of calcium; and 100 g of *paneer* contains 476 mg of calcium. Thus, to meet the recommended calcium intake of 600 mg/day, you can feed your toddler a 100 ml of milk thrice a day ( $118 \times 3 = 354$  mg/d). The rest of the requirement can be met by feeding her with other dairy products such as curds, yoghurts, *paneer*, cheese or other calcium rich sources such as green leafy vegetables, fish and nuts and oil seeds.

## **Do girls need more milk than boys?**

The Indian Council of Medical Research does not recommend a difference in the requirement of calcium or the daily number of portions of milk and milk product consumption among children aged 1 to 9 years. However, the calcium requirements increase as they grow, due to the growth spurt occurring during the phase of adolescence.

## **Should toddlers consume more milk?**

Toddlerhood makes your child go through an intense phase of developmental changes in his physical, psychological and social attributes, demanding more calcium and vitamin requirements. As milk forms a major part of a toddler's diet, it serves as the primary source of all the nutrients that your child requires. Picky eaters may struggle to get enough protein and calories in their diets. Milk is an easy, nutrient-rich way to compensate the need and prevent malnutrition.

## **Best time to drink milk**

There is no scientific evidence supporting the taboo that milk consumption should be avoided on empty stomach. Milk, being a complex food, can be had any time of the day.

Milk is a wholesome food for your toddler. Only pasteurized or boiled milk should be fed to your child to ensure protection from contamination and pathogens.

On the negative side, some children are allergic to milk proteins or intolerant to milk sugar (lactose). If your child does not tolerate milk, it may be replaced by an equal volume of curd/yogurt/soymilk/almond milk.