

► The Great American Dairy Myth

Despite advertising to the contrary, cow's milk doesn't always do a body good

By Joseph J. Murphy, DC



I HAVE LONG BEEN A PROPONENT OF A NONDAIRY DIET.

I raised my four children that way, and my youngest two, ages 5 and 3, have been dairy-free since birth. Their mother did not have any dairy during nursing, and both youngsters have less colds and sickness than any of their peers. I also counsel my patients to avoid dairy at all costs.

So what's the problem with dairy?

Cow's milk and milk products are the most pervasive substances causing food allergies on the planet, and are both easily obtained and widely used as foods. Casein, a protein found in milk, appears to be the major cause of adverse reactions, and is found in milk of all forms, including lactose-free or low-lactose products. It is

a very large and convoluted protein, often mistaken for a foreign substance by our immune systems. And truly it is, because cow's milk is meant for baby cows, not humans.

A human infant's intestinal tract is designed to digest mother's breast milk from birth to at least 9 months of age, preferably up to 12 months. Breast milk contains immune factors that protect against foreign substances, and it contains three times the lactose, one-third the calcium, a more absorbable form of iron and higher amounts of essential fatty acids than cow's milk. Cow's milk formula prematurely exposes an infant's fragile intestine to cow's milk, and through a long series of maladaptive biological functions, the infant



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becomes sensitive (allergic) to that cow's milk.

However, it's important to differentiate a milk allergy from lactose intolerance. Lactose intolerance means the enzyme lactase is not produced by the body in a sufficient enough quantity to digest lactose (milk sugar), resulting in gastric symptoms, such as cramping, gas, bloating and/or diarrhea. One can be lactose intolerant and yet ingest low-lactose, or lactose-free milk and dairy products without ill effects. An allergy to casein is another matter, and has nothing to do with lactose.

If you are allergic to casein, some of the symptoms include an overproduction of mucus, post-nasal drip, frequent headaches and sinus problems, including infections or skin reactions. In fact, even if you are not



American Dairy Association touted dairy as “one of the four food groups.” Even today, dairy has its own section on the USDA food pyramid. But in reality, we don't need dairy and shouldn't look at it as a separate or essential food category in our diet.

While some argue milk is high in protein, I ask, at what cost? If casein is one of the most allergic proteins to humans, why ingest it at all? I believe soy and other legumes are much better alternatives — and even lean meats can provide protein. If you are not a vegan, sustainable finfish that is low in mercury, like salmon and tilapia, is a fantastic source of calcium and protein.

While there has been much misinformation circulated concerning soy products in the recent past, soy is actually a very healthy choice. Cultures that have

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“allergic” to casein, it still causes most people to produce too much mucus.

Did you know two-thirds of the world's population cannot tolerate milk? A rapidly growing number of Americans are allergic to cow's milk, and many people in other cultures don't ever ingest milk, instead getting their protein from legume sources, and their calcium from legumes and vegetables.

One of the biggest untruths the American Dairy Association uses to promote cow's milk as “essential” is stating it's the only good source of dietary calcium, but it's time to debunk this myth. There are many other excellent sources of calcium, such as dark green leafy vegetables, legumes, some fruits, figs and fish. Many cultures that choose not to eat dairy have better health and stronger bones by getting their calcium from these foods.

Why, then, is our American culture so hung up on cow's milk? The problem is multi-factorial and has both cultural and economic roots. Milk and milk products are big business in America, and many in my generation were raised to believe milk is an “essential food” a person cannot live properly without. But nothing could be further from the truth!

Many of us were raised at a time when the

eaten soy- and vegetable-based diets have been proven to be the healthiest on earth, having greater longevity, lower cancer rates and lower rates of chronic illness.

My suggestion is to eliminate dairy as much as possible from your diet. If you stop dairy completely, you will notice skin changes within 24 hours, and a decrease in sinus issues and mucus production within one week. Eat more vegetables, fruits and whole foods. Eat more fiber and less fat. And never, ever give babies milk to drink or cheese to eat.

For more information about a nondairy diet, including a downloadable journal to take the 10-day, nondairy challenge, visit www.godairyfree.org.

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Dr. Joseph J. Murphy has been in private practice for 25 years, and currently practices in New Jersey. He is a past president of The N.J. Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NJBCE), and received his bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry from Rider College and his Doctor of Chiropractic Degree from Palmer College.

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