Is Milk a Friend or Foe?

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Do you remember seeing those “Got Milk?” posters of celebrities with white milk mustaches? Me too. Have you ever investigated the facts and nutritional benefits milk provides us? Me neither. In the article “Got Milk? Might Not Be Doing You Much Good” from *The New York Times,* Aaron Carroll (2014) argues that “milk consumption may not only be unhelpful, but it might also be detrimental” to our health. He gives examples of studies that have been done that can show no correlation between the total amount of calcium intake and the risk of bone fractures and some studies show that drinking milk may be linked to some negative effects. He brings up the fact of how the dairy industry advertises that “Milk is good for your bones it contains calcium and vitamin D and does a body good” when there isn't much evidence of that. He also claims that most of us don’t need to drink milk because we aren't deficient in the nutrients it provides in our diets.

I somewhat agree with the author's argument. Some parts of the article seem to make sense, and some don’t. I agree with Carroll (2014) that milk may not be as nutritious and necessary in our diets as we were pushed to believe, But I disagree with Carroll (2014) that most people in the U.S. are not clinically deficient in these nutrients. I agree with Carroll (2014) that “it is odd that milk continues to get a pass” even though it is not a low-calorie beverage and even non-fat milk can mean an additional 250 calories consumed. I also agree that seeing all these studies and trials related to milk consumption having no relation to less bone fractures is a surprising fact to come across since we have been told from such a young age that drinking milk “gives you strong bones.”

Carroll (2014) argues that drinking milk may not be as necessary in our everyday diets as we have been pushed to believe, despite what the United States department of agriculture and other organizations recommend for daily dairy consumption. I agree with him on this because I was told growing up that drinking milk is very important to have strong bones and the only two choices school lunches give you are milk and juice. In the article “USDA recommends three cups

of dairy per day. Is it too much?" from *Very well health,* by Stephanie Brown (2021) she states that the USDA recommends drinking three cups of milk a day, despite the evidence that we don't need to drink this much. She also states that "Dairy is a huge industry in this country and a big part of many states economy, this makes dairy a political lightning rod as well." Which could explain why we are influenced in school that we need to drink more milk and why so many people think they need to add milk into their everyday diet. The dairy industry is important to the economy. Some examples that Brown (2021) provided can explain why we are told to drink more milk at school and by organizations like the USDA. This supports Carroll's argument that drinking milk may not be as necessary in our everyday diets as we have been pushed to believe. Instead, it may be more to keep the dairy industry alive.

Carrol (2014) claims that most people in the US are not clinically deficient in vitamin D and calcium. I disagree with this statement. Personally, I am Vitamin D deficient and most of my family is too. While researching this, I found many people indeed are deficient in these nutrients. Adda Bjarnadottir,MS,RDN says in her article "7 nutrient deficiencies that are incredibly common" from *Healthline* (2023) that both calcium and vitamin D made this list of most common nutrient deficiencies. Making Carrol's statement about this not being the case, false. Carroll (2014) may have gotten his facts wrong here. While doing some more research, I found that according to Bjarnadottir (2023) Vitamin D and calcium are a part of the seven most common nutrient deficiencies found in people. Bjarnadottir (2023) states that 42% of people may be deficient in vitamin D and found that "One survey in the United States found that fewer than 15% of teenage girls, fewer than 10% of women over 50, and fewer than 22% of teenage boys and men over 50 met the recommended calcium intake." These numbers are a lot higher than I assumed they would be.

Carroll (2014) states that "it's odd that milk continues to get a pass" even though it is not a low-calorie beverage and even non-fat milk can mean an additional 250 calories (about 20 minutes of running) consumed. I did not know that milk had this many calories, so it has opened my eyes as to how many extra calories can come from drinking milk. I assumed, like many of us

probably did, that milk is a healthy beverage choice. In the article "USDA recommends 3 cups of dairy per day is it too much?" from *Very well health,* by Stephanie Brown (2023) she brings up how "In addition to gastrointestinal discomfort, Levin pointed to studies that have also linked milk consumption to breast, ovarian, and prostate cancers and an increased risk of asthma." These are interesting and important facts I believe more of us need to be aware of. Milk can be linked to many health problems some people may not be aware of. After reading Browns (2023) article, reading about the potential effects milk consumption can be linked too, this does not lead me to believe milk is as healthy as the USDA portrays it out to be. This supports Carrolls point that it's strange milk continuously gets a pass.

Caroll (2014) also brought up some studies and trials related to milk consumption and calcium intake showing no relation to bone fractures. One study showed that with increased calcium intake, it may have even increased the risk of hip fractures. Carrol (2014) states that "meta-analysis also reviewed randomized controlled trials that examined if calcium supplements could lower the risk of fracture. More than 6,000 middle-aged and older adults participated in these studies where subjects were randomly assigned to get extra calcium or a placebo. Not only did the extra calcium not reduce the rate of fractures, but the researchers were also concerned that it may have increased the risk of hip fractures." Although milk and dairy are some of the best sources of calcium, this study shows us that many Americans aren't aware of the reason they are persuaded so heavily to drink milk because we are taught in school that it makes your bones stronger. With these studies showing little to no benefit linked to higher calcium intake, I find it interesting that many Americans including myself, aren't aware of this. These studies have shown that Carrolls argument here is valid because if more Americans could review this study, they may change their minds on how necessary they believe milk is in their diet.

In review, Carroll's points that milk may not be as nutritious and necessary in our diets as we were pushed to believe, That most people in the US are not clinically deficient in these nutrients, that "it is odd that milk continues to get a pass" even though it is not a low-calorie beverage and even non-fat milk can mean an additional 250 calories (about 20 minutes of

running) consumed, and that seeing all these studies and trials related to milk consumption having no relation to bone fractures are some important points I think a lot of us should be more aware of. While researching deeper into to argument of Carrol (2014) I have realized and learned a lot about the positive and negative effects milk can provide, but also learned that the debate on whether dairy milk is necessary for a healthy diet isn't going anywhere anytime soon. I also learned that there are many other milk alternative options available, such as oat milk, soy milk, lactose free milk and nut milks which I may be switching to for a healthier alternative. While back in elementary, middle and high school I didn’t put much thought into the posters I was seeing hung around the school advertising us all to drink more milk, If I saw one of those posters today I would definitely pay attention to who was behind the advertising of them, such as maybe the dairy industry?

References

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