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News Release Use Immediately

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Got Milk? June is dairy month. Do you know how much dairy you need daily and the importance of this food group? Dairy is also a food that needs some explanation of “sell by dates”. Dairy is not just for June it is for every day of the year and for all ages.

The foods in the dairy group include milk, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, pudding, and ice milk/ice cream. The key to selecting dairy is to look for low fat or non-fat foods, such as 1% or skim and low-fat or fat free cheese and yogurt most of the time. When selecting yogurt, look for those lower in sugar per serving. When selecting dairy for small children, seek advice from your family physician or pediatrician. Children do need dairy that is higher in fat when they are in those growing years.

So, what is important about making sure you get your daily recommended amount of dairy? Dairy products are rich in calcium, protein, and vitamins to help build strong bones and teeth. Eating dairy products can lower your risk of developing a disease called osteoporosis that occurs when bones become weak and break easily. Calcium also keeps your nerves, heart, and muscles healthy, and may help regulate your blood pressure. Calcium from dairy products may also help you reach or maintain a healthy weight. These are all very good reasons for you to be sure that you and your family have enough dairy in your diet.

What if you are lactose intolerant or sensitive to dairy products? Look for enriched products such as orange juice, margarine and cereal. Also, contact your physician and inquire about taking a vitamin D Calcium supplement. It is important that you have vitamin D along with the calcium as vitamin D helps your body absorb the calcium into your body. Bone health is important no matter how old you are.

Calcium is an important nutrient for building strong bones and preventing osteoporosis. Combine your daily recommended amount of the dairy group with physical activities such as walking, jumping rope, volleyball, basket ball and lifting weights and you are sure to keep your bones strong.

What is important about the “sell by” date? The sell by date insures the consumer that the product is fresh. If milk has been kept cold (40 degrees Fahrenheit or below), it will usually stay fresh for 2 or 3 days after the “sell by” date. If yogurt has been kept cold, it will usually stay fresh for up to a week after the “sell by” date. When selecting your dairy product, be sure to find the “sell by” date and try to find the one that will give you the most days between date of purchase and finishing the product.

There are several tips to boosting your calcium intake. Try drinking low-fat or fat-free milk at meals. Drink cocoa made with milk instead of coffee or tea. When making hot cereal, prepare them with milk instead of water. Make dried and canned soups with milk instead of water and add non-fat dry milk powder to soups, stews, and casseroles.

So, got milk? Remember, it is vital to maintain healthy bones along with a healthy happy heart. Enjoy your summer and don't forget to include dairy and physical activity.

Reference: NEP Milk Group Fact Sheet For more information, contact Buffalo County Extension, 308-236-1235 or e-mail Ranae Aspen at raspen2@unl.edu. Have a healthy and happy summer!