



# Nutrition for Family Living

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## February, 2008 Topics

March is National Nutrition Month®

Restricting milk intake may have serious effects on bone health, especially for adolescent girls

## March is National Nutrition Month®

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By Gayle Coleman and Susan Nitzke

National Nutrition Month® is a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored annually by the American Dietetic Association (ADA). The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. Key messages for this year's *Nutrition: It's a Matter of Fact* month campaign are:

- Don't be misled by media headlines or e-mail messages that present one nutrition message on one day and a contradictory nutrition message on another day. Media headlines can be misleading because they might be based on just one study rather than the cumulative research. It's important to get the whole story and choose foods sensibly by looking at the big picture. A single food or meal doesn't make or break a healthful diet. When consumed in moderation in the appropriate portion size, all foods can fit into a healthful diet.
- Look beyond the myths of nutrition. There are some myths that consumers follow as truth. Focus on information that is based on scientific research. Food and nutrition misinformation can have harmful effects on your health and well-being, as well as your wallet.
- Food and nutrition research can be complicated and confusing. Registered dietitians can help consumers understand complicated food and nutrition research.
- Healthful eating is not the same for everyone. Registered dietitians are uniquely qualified to communicate current and emerging science-based nutrition information and are an instrumental part of developing a diet plan that is unique to an individual's particular needs.

As implied by the last bulleted message above, one of the purposes of National Nutrition Month® is to promote ADA and its members to the public and the media as the most valuable and credible source of timely, scientifically-based food and nutrition information, so there are restrictions on the use of the campaign materials. Use of National Nutrition Month® is encouraged by ADA, but only in accordance with their guidelines that are published at <http://www.eatright.org>. Although most of the nutrition month materials are specific to the campaign and probably not useful for our nutrition education programs, measuring spoons and pencils with grape designs are two examples of items from their catalog that may be useful reminders of nutrition messages in your Extension programs. See <http://jimcolemanltd.com/nnm/>.

Implication for Extension Educators: The *Nutrition: It's a Matter of Fact* theme and key messages of this year's campaign are consistent with priorities of the Eating Well and Being Active Team and WNEP. This is a good time to coordinate your nutrition education activities for March with those of local dietitians, media outlets, and partner agencies that are promoting the *Nutrition: It's a Matter of Fact* theme.



## Restricting milk intake may have serious effects on bone health, especially for adolescent girls

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By Susan Nitzke

Adequate Calcium Today (ACT) is a nutrition program that was recently conducted with 6th graders in six states. Using data collected prior to receiving the nutrition program, a subgroup of 291 girls from the ACT study in Indiana and California was chosen for further analyses to examine the relationships among perceived milk intolerance, dietary intake, and bone mineral content. Calcium intake is especially important at this age when bones are growing at a rapid rate. The girls who participated in the sub-study included Asians (25%), Hispanics (33%) and whites (42%), but no African-Americans. One interesting finding was that the rates of perceived milk intolerance were similar for all three ethnic groups. Even when the researchers controlled the analysis for the participants' ethnicity, the 47 girls who reported that they had milk intolerance had lower calcium intakes (averaging 212 mg/day less than the other girls) and lower mineral density in their spines. The article concludes with this statement:

“...it is important to address misconceptions surrounding lactose intolerance at an early age, to prevent perceived lactose intolerance from reducing calcium intake, with consequent negative effects on bone status.”

**Implications for Extension educators:** The Dietary Guidelines for Americans states “For individuals who choose to or must avoid all milk products (e.g., individuals with lactose intolerance, vegans), non-dairy calcium-containing alternatives may be selected to help meet calcium needs” (page 26). This presents a challenge to educators. While it is important to respect learners' preferences when it comes to drinking milk and eating yogurt and cheese, studies show that children and adults who avoid milk and milk products have higher risk of low bone mineral density, increasing their risk for osteoporosis (brittle bones) later in life. It is especially important to help learners who are not able or willing to consume the recommended amounts of milk and milk products understand the importance of choosing appropriate alternatives. Learner-centered lessons on reading labels and understanding choices can help individuals identify calcium-fortified alternatives such as calcium-fortified soy milk and calcium-fortified orange juice or choosing alternatives within the milk food group such as yogurt or lactose-free milk. The B.O.N.E.S. lesson in WIN Kids Lessons (part of the Wellness IN (WIN) the Rockies project), includes information on calcium in a variety of foods and uses a learner-centered approach. See [https://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/apps/flrc/tch\\_res2/resourceDetails.cfm?rid=306](https://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/apps/flrc/tch_res2/resourceDetails.cfm?rid=306) for more information and to access this lesson.

Reference: Matlik L, Savaiano D, McCabe G, VanLoan M, Blue CL, Boushey CJ. Perceived milk intolerance is related to bone mineral content in 10- to 13-year-old female adolescents. *Pediatrics* 2007;120:e669-e677. (This article is available online at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/120/3/e669>.)