

Eat More Yogurt and Avoid Osteoporosis

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › You could call raw, grass fed yogurt edible bacteria, which is surprisingly easy to make with the right ingredients and conditions, and may help explain how humans managed to survive prehistoric eras
- › A Dublin-based study testing yogurt on more than 4,300 people found 39% of the women and 52% of the men had a lower osteoporosis risk when they ate yogurt compared to those who did not
- › Reading labels on the yogurt you buy is important, as some brands may offer a few "clean" options, but most of them are loaded with harmful additives such as sugar, preservatives, artificial sweeteners and colorings
- › Raw, grass fed yogurt is a great source of natural, healthy bacteria, which are microorganisms in your gut that interact with your body in ways that can prevent the development of many diseases

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If someone asked you who invented yogurt and how long it's been on the foodie landscape, you may not know the answer, so I'll tell you. Yogurt was probably one of the first-ever "processed" foods, as it was created as a happy accident somewhere in Central Asia as early as the Neolithic Age, 4,500 years before the Common Era, aka the Christian Era.

If you've ever wondered how humans survived those prehistoric epochs, yogurt consumption may help explain it. As a cultured milk product, we've known for some time it helps balance your intestinal bacteria for digestive health, but research¹ reveals it also has advantages for your bones.

In fact, the research showed a yogurt-inclusive diet increased bone density and lowered osteoporosis risk. Yogurt, you may remember, is actually fermented milk. You could even call it edible bacteria, which is surprisingly easy to make if you have a few key ingredients and the right conditions.

It may help your gut develop a healthy microbiome and eliminate toxins. Take two beneficial bacteria, lactobacillus bulgaricus and streptococcus thermophilus, add them to high-quality raw, grass fed milk, and when it's a certain temperature, it will ferment. While that may not sound all that appetizing, the end-product will be a smooth, delicious-tasting yogurt.

Early Yogurt Production and Consumption

The potential health benefits of milk products were recorded in Ayurvedic medicine as early as 6,000 B.C. Today,² Indian cuisine serves up hundreds of types of yogurt, and its name, "yogurt," is universal.

When America learned the secret of bacteria-fermented milk, it set about "diversifying" the product, mixing it with fruit, honey or sugar to make it more palatable, which you'll learn a little later actually served to make yogurt less a healthy, go-to snack and more of a health liability.

Today, proponents in Turkey and Eastern Mediterranean regions create products such as a drink (ayran), cucumber mix (cacik in Turkish), soup paste (tarhana) and yogurt cheese (çökelek in Turkish) prepared as it's been for centuries in cultures that continue to thrive.

Why is this significant? Because what was discovered by researchers based at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, in early 2017 was that besides improved overall physical fitness, eating yogurt daily was linked with a 31% lower risk of osteopenia and a 39%

lower risk of osteoporosis, as well as a 52% lower risk in men compared with non-yogurt eaters.³ Bel Marra Health reported:⁴

"In order to identify the reasoning behind this association and the risk factors for being diagnosed as osteoporotic, an analysis of several factors such as BMI, kidney function, physical activity, servings of milk or cheese, and calcium or vitamin D supplementation as well as traditional risk factors for bone health — like smoking and alcohol intake — were taken into account."

Eating High-Quality Yogurt May Protect Your Bones

The New York Times said the scientists tracked more than 4,300 adults, taking several factors into consideration, and found that compared to people who didn't eat it at all, those who ate yogurt daily had a 3% to 4% increase in bone density.⁵

Bone loss is the cause of [osteoporosis](#), or literally "porous bones," a malady suffered by 10.2 million people in the U.S., most of whom are women, according to Medical News Today.⁶ Incredibly, medications many doctors give their patients for this condition may cause fractures due to increased bone loss and are linked with a higher cancer risk.

The researchers also found that the participants' bone loss biomarkers were 9.5% lower for those who ate more yogurt compared to those who consumed the least, indicating that there was less bone breakdown. Eamon Laird, lead study author and postdoctoral research fellow at Trinity College Dublin, noted:⁷

"Yogurt is a rich source of different bone promoting nutrients and thus our findings in some ways are not surprising. The data suggest that improving yogurt intakes could be a strategy for maintaining bone health but it needs verification through future research as it is observational."

The results demonstrate a significant association of bone health and frailty with a relatively simple and cheap food product. What is now needed is verification of these observations from randomized controlled trials as we still don't

understand the exact mechanisms which could be due to the benefits of microbiota or the macro and micronutrient composition of the yogurt."

However, Laird added that because the study was observational in nature, it didn't necessarily prove cause and effect. He said that one thing it does prove, however, is that yogurt is a good source of micronutrients, vitamin D, B vitamins and calcium, not to mention protein and **probiotics**.

But while other dairy products don't have the same beneficial effects that yogurt has, yogurt often is loaded down with so many additives and sugar that any advantages go by the wayside. Such additives turn yogurt into a health detriment rather than being a positive, nutritionally. Laird cautioned, "We have to be careful about that."

Problems to Look for When Buying Yogurt

Reading labels on the yogurt you buy at the store is important. Some brands may offer a few "clean" options, but most of them are loaded with harmful additives. The Cornucopia Institute offers a "scorecard" for commercial yogurts, by brand as opposed to individual products, for consumers to get a better idea of what they're buying, and:⁸

"[T]o hold manufacturers and marketers accountable for turning yogurt – an ancient, wholesome food – into a convenience/ junk food loaded with sweeteners, preservatives, thickeners, milk replacements and artificial flavors and colors ...

Organic food dramatically reduces exposure to toxic agrochemicals. In addition, peer-reviewed, published research indicates that organic milk is nutritionally superior to conventional milk, which often comes from dairy cows confined in feedlots and fed a diet of GMO [genetically modified organism] grain ... [and] nutrition in addition to lower levels of chemical residues."

There are yogurt brands out there with 22 or more grams of sugar per serving – as much or more than what you'd find in a Twinkie! The negative effects from sugar far

outweigh the minimal probiotic benefits you may receive from store-bought yogurt.

Some of the problems to look for when buying yogurt include:

Thickeners and stabilizers such as carrageenan, guar gum and pectin. Carrageenan, the Institute says, is known as "a potent intestinal inflammatory agent causing a myriad of negative health outcomes, including potential cancer"

Artificial sweeteners such as [sucralose](#) (which may have neurotoxic effects, raise your insulin levels and cause cancer), aspartame and saccharin – which confuse your metabolism – are all created in a lab

[High-fructose corn syrup](#) (HFCS), which a Princeton University study⁹ said "prompts considerably more weight gain"

Artificial colorings, usually from industrial food processing operations using synthetic chemicals

Synthetic nutrients, such as milk protein concentrate, which often displaces the real article, are used by yogurt manufacturers to save money

Preservatives such as sodium benzoate, genetically engineered (GE) ingredients, growth hormones, herbicides and pesticides

Milk from [concentrated animal feeding operations](#) (CAFOs)

Yogurt Is Good for You When It's 'Clean'

Probiotics play an incredibly beneficial role in your gut health. The type and quantity of microorganisms in your gut interact with your body in ways that can either prevent or encourage the development of many diseases.

Yogurt is a great source of natural, healthy bacteria as long as it's not pasteurized, is made from grass fed cows' milk and does not contain added sugars or artificial

sweeteners. Food Babe¹⁰ says the only yogurt she recommends is plain organic yogurt, either Greek or regular (I would add to make it grass fed as well), and asserts:

"The food industry has a reputation of taking incredibly healthy items and turning them into processed junk food and this is exactly what has happened to most yogurts available on the market ...

Conventional yogurt usually comes from milk produced by cows that are confined and unable to graze in open pasture. They're usually fed GMO grains, not grass. As the yogurt ferments, chemical defoamers are sometimes added ... These practices alarm me, since yogurt has been such a healthy, longevity-promoting food for ages."

What you may not realize when you pick yogurt up from a grocery store dairy case is that yogurt is only as good as the milk that was used to make it. To ensure your yogurt contains all the good and none of the bad ingredients for optimal health, it's not difficult to **make your own**, using 100% organic, raw, grass fed milk.

Most people know that yogurt provides calcium, a mineral the National Osteoporosis Foundation¹¹ says is necessary for life, as it builds bones, helps your blood to clot and allows your muscles to contract and your nerves to send messages. Further, when you don't get enough calcium (and it's best derived from food), it's leached from your bones.

Besides the all-important vitamin D, **B vitamins** are another reason to eat grass fed yogurt. Then there's phosphorus, potassium and riboflavin, as well as high-quality protein, beneficial probiotics and cancer-fighting conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA, a very important fatty acid, of which one of the only other sources is grass fed beef.

Sources and References

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