June is Dairy Month – Did You Know?
By Janet Hackert, Regional Nutrition and Health Education Specialist

June is Dairy Month and there is a lot to know about dairy foods.

Most people know that milk, yogurt, and cheeses are a great source of calcium. Many dairy options also have Vitamin D. Did you know that they have many other nutrients we need in a healthy eating plan as well? Milk and milk products also have potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, Vitamin A, protein, Vitamin B12, riboflavin, and niacin. Of course the healthier options are those lower in fat and added sugars.

Did you know that the one time when the “lower fat options are healthier” recommendation does not apply is when talking about babies? The fat in milk helps in brain development, especially important to children under two years old. The whole milk provides the usual nutrients as well as the essential amino acids needed for growth.

Did you know that when there is mold on food it should be thrown out? And did you know that an exception is when the food in question is hard cheese? Moldy foods generally are spoiled because visible mold spores form on the end of their stalks while at the same time sending roots down deeply into the soft food. Hard cheeses are solid enough, though, to prevent these roots from getting very far into the hunk of cheese. To safely use such a contaminated product, remove the mold that can be seen along with another inch into the block around it.

Did you know that although foods like butter, sour cream and cream cheese are sold in the dairy section of most grocery stores, they are primarily made from the milk fat and so have little or none of those healthy nutrients found in other milk-based foods? Choose these options less often or in smaller quantities as part of healthy eating plan.

Did you know there are lots of ways to use dairy foods? For example, low- or non-fat yogurt can be substituted for some or all of the sour cream in many recipes including ranch dip or dressing, baked goods and sauces. It maintains the creamy texture but adds the calcium and other nutrients found in yogurt and not in sour cream.

Be creative and find other ways to make healthy dairy choices for meals and snacks this June – Dairy Month.

For more information on dairy foods or any other topic, contact me, Janet Hackert, at 660-425-6434 or HackertJ@missouri.edu or your local University of Missouri Extension office.

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