

Maybe Dairy Fat Isn't So Bad After All



By Ruth Kava — April 6, 2016



[1] *Milk at the source* via

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A recent [study](#) [3] challenges the recommendation that we should avoid dairy fat. Advice to limit all dietary fat, and to drink only 1 percent (low fat) or skim (non-fat) milk has been a cornerstone of dietary guidance for years.

Yet, at least with respect to the occurrence of new cases of diabetes, full-fat dairy products just might have a preventive edge, according to the report.

The researchers examined blood levels of dairy fatty acids in participants in two long-term prospective studies. Samples from the Nurses' Health study were collected in 1989-90, and those from the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study were obtained in 1993-94. In all, the samples from 3,333 adults aged 30-75 years were analyzed. On average, the participants were followed for about 15 years to assess the incidence of diabetes. During that time 277 new cases of diabetes were diagnosed.

The researchers found that higher plasma levels of particular fatty acids derived from dairy foods were associated with a lower risk of developing diabetes — by anywhere from 44 to 52 percent — and these differences were statistically significant.

So is it time to revamp our dietary guidance, and move back to consuming full-fat dairy products to avoid diabetes?

We must point out that 277 new cases of diabetes is not a very large sample size, considering the size of the original sample. This was just one study, and some independent substantiation would be important before widespread changes are made for the population as a whole.

About the paper in *Circulation*, senior author Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, from the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, was [quoted](#) [4] as saying, “This is just one more piece of evidence showing that we really need to stop making recommendations about food based on theories about one nutrient in food. It’s crucial at this time to understand that it’s about food as a whole, and not about single nutrients.”

We certainly agree with that sentiment, and thus would question focusing on dairy fats, just as we always have.

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