

For WIC Staff: Frequently Asked Questions for the Lowfat Milk Change

General Questions

1. Q: Why can't I buy 2% milk anymore? Why is the type of milk changing?

A: The majority of studies show that 1% and nonfat milks are the healthiest milks to drink. There has been a big change in most federal programs, such as Head Start and School Breakfast and Lunch, to provide only 1% lowfat and nonfat milk to their participants.

2. Q: When did this change occur? When did the requirement change?

A: The change occurred (or will occur) Sept. 29, 2014. The requirements are based on the latest United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) revisions to the WIC food packages published March 4, 2014.

3. Q: Do nonfat and 1% milk have the same nutrition as whole and 2% milk? Or: Does Vitamin D (whole) milk have more vitamins?

A: Many families are concerned that 1% lowfat and nonfat milk are watered down whole milk. That is not true. Actually, 1% lowfat and nonfat milk have the same vitamins, minerals and protein as 2% and whole milk. They just have less fat.

4. Q: Why does 1% milk have more sugar than the other types of milk?

A: It's great that you are checking food labels! 1% milk has a tiny bit more sugar than the other types of milk because it has more milk solids added to it. For an 8-ounce glass of milk, 1% milk has 13 grams of sugar; the other types of milk have 12 grams. All of this sugar is lactose, the natural sugar in milk. As a comparison, chocolate milk has up to 24 grams of sugar in 8 ounces! That's because sucrose (white sugar) or high fructose corn syrup is added to sweeten the milk.

5. Q: Isn't 2% milk lowfat?

A: 2% milk is reduced fat milk which means that it is lower in fat than whole milk, but it has too much fat to be labelled lowfat. 1% lowfat milk has less than half the amount of fat as 2% milk.

6. Q: What does "1%" mean? 1% of what?

A: "1%" means that 1% of the milk's **total weight** is from fat. "2%" means that 2% of the milk's total weight is from fat. Whole milk is about 4% fat by weight.

7. Q: Can my child under 2 years of age still get whole milk?

A: Yes, children under 2 can still get whole milk.

8. Q: What milk alternative does WIC offer?

A: WIC offers soy beverages. As of Sept. 29, 2014 a prescription is no longer required for children to get soy beverages. Pregnant and postpartum women can already choose soy beverages.

9. Q: What if I choose evaporated milk?

A: There is no 1% evaporated milk so the only evaporated milk available to WIC participants will be “fat free.”

10. Q: What if I drink lactose free milk?

A: For those who purchase lactose free milk with WIC checks, the choices will be 1% lowfat lactose free milk or nonfat lactose free milk.

For participants who are concerned about switching to 1% or nonfat milk

Response: It may be hard to change something that you and your family have been used to doing. What concerns you about changing to 1% or nonfat milk?

If concerned about taste:

1. Q: What if my child doesn't like the taste of 1% or nonfat milk?

A: First, try a taste test with your child and see if he/she likes 1% milk. Often if children are used to drinking 2% milk, they can't tell the difference between the taste of 2% and 1% milk. California milk producers add milk solids to 2%, 1% and nonfat milks to give them a creamier taste. As the parent you can set an example by showing that you like 1% or nonfat milk too. If your child drinks whole milk or 2% milk, you can mix that milk with the new 1% milk until he/she gets used to the taste of 1% milk (also, see answers to the question below).

You can also use 1% or nonfat milk in recipes. Often you can't taste the difference when it is mixed with other ingredients.

If concerned about how to switch or getting used to a new milk:

2. Q: How do I switch from 2% or whole milk to 1% or nonfat milk?

A: If you drink whole milk, first mix equal amounts of whole milk and 1% milk together. Then lessen the amount of whole milk you mix in with the 1% milk each day. After about a week you will get used to the taste of the 1% milk alone. You can use this same process when switching from 2% to 1% or nonfat milk.

If concerned about whether or not it's really healthier:

3. Q: What's the difference in fat between whole milk, 2% milk and 1% milk?

A: For an 8-ounce glass of milk, whole milk has about 2 teaspoons of fat, 2% milk has a little over 1 teaspoon of fat, 1% milk has about half a teaspoon of fat, and nonfat milk has almost zero fat.

4. Q: Does the difference between 2% and 1% milk really make that much of a difference to my health?

A: 2% milk has more than double the amount of fat as 1% milk and nearly 5 times the amount of fat as nonfat milk. Whole milk and 2% milk add unnecessary saturated fat and cholesterol to our diets. Over time, too much fat in our diets can lead to heart disease and overweight.

5. Q: What if I avoid nonfat milk because it's more processed than whole milk?

A: The bulk of research at this time indicates that 1% and nonfat are the healthiest types of milk. Until more research is available, USDA and therefore WIC are adhering to what the majority of research indicates. If new research leads to different recommendations, then that will be reflected in future food package changes.

Regarding processing, in California all industrially produced milk contains nonfat milk solids, including whole milk and even industrially produced organic milk.

Other possible concerns:

6. Q: What if my child gets constipation or diarrhea with nonfat milk?

A: If your child did not have constipation or diarrhea after drinking whole milk, then nonfat milk should not cause constipation or diarrhea. Nonfat milk has the same amount of protein, vitamins and minerals as lowfat and whole milk. The only difference is the fat. Let's take a look at some other things that may cause constipation or diarrhea...

7. Q: What if my child needs extra calories for weight gain?

A: Talk to a nutritionist if you are concerned about your child's weight. They can help with suggestions of ways to increase calories.

