



Contact:
Amy Thompson
410.602.0202 X 112
amyt@outloudllc.com

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BRINGS CHANGES TO FLAVORED MILK; NOW LOWER IN CALORIES AND SUGAR

More than Five Years of Reformulations by U.S. Milk Processors Brings Significant Changes to Nutrient-Rich School Milk

Washington (August 22, 2011): When school resumes in the fall, cafeterias will be serving more whole grains, more fresh vegetables and milk kids, schools and moms will love. With the ongoing debate over flavored milk in schools, many of the nation's milk processors have been hard at work over the last five years with their local districts to lower the calories and sugar in this popular drink.

This school year when kids pick up a carton of flavored milk with their lunch, the majority will be less than 150 calories. It's projected to contain, on average, just 31 calories more than white milk – the result of ongoing work by the nation's milk processors to provide nutritious new products with the same great taste kids love. Continuing a five-year trend in school milk changes, the industry's reformulations are projected to result in fat free and lowfat chocolate milks with 38% less added sugar in the last five years, according to a new national analysis of flavored milk in school.¹

"Milk is a nutritious, core component of school meals and the milk industry is committed to offering a product that meets school nutrition standards and is appealing to students," said Vivien Godfrey, CEO of the Milk Processor Education Program, made up of the nation's milk processors. "Whether plain or flavored, milk contributes so many vital nutrients to a child's diet and we want to do our part to be sure the milk on the tray is enjoyed and actually consumed with the meal."

Milk companies across the U.S. are reformulating flavored milk to lower total calories and decrease added sugars and fat, while preserving its nutritional value and taste appeal. These new products aim for 150 calories and fewer than 22 grams of total sugar (or 10 grams of added sugars) per 8-ounce serving.

The Great Debate

Due to concerns about childhood obesity, some schools have made the decision to remove chocolate and other flavored milks from the cafeteria. Even though these bans have been well-intentioned, they have done more nutritional harm than good. Research suggests lowfat chocolate milk is the most popular milk choice in schools and kids drink less milk – and get fewer essential nutrients – if it's taken away.

--more--

The pattern has been consistent. When flavored milk is removed from the lunchroom and only white milk is offered, there has been a dramatic decrease in milk consumption, according to several studies.

- When flavored milk was removed from the cafeteria in a school district in Connecticut, milk decreased in all grades, ranging from 37% to 63%.²
- A large study involving seven school districts across the country (58 elementary and secondary schools) found that when students did not have the option of flavored milk, milk consumption dropped by an average of 35%, along with a substantial reduction in nutrients – which are not easy or affordable to replace. ³
- The same study found the drop in consumption did not recover over time. Even the 40 schools that were in their second year of a limited-or no-flavors policy did not see students moving to white milk. On average, students at these schools drank 37% less milk compared to when they had flavored milk available every school day.
- Some school districts have even reversed their previous decision and reinstated flavored milk due to the decline in milk consumption.

Nutrients Down the Drain

If milk is not consumed with the noon meal, it's nearly impossible for children to meet their needs for calcium, vitamin D and potassium – which are already identified by the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans as limited in children's diets. Milk is the #1 food source of these essential nutrients in the American diet.

"It's important for parents to recognize the implications of removing chocolate milk from school meals," said Sandra Ford, SNS, School Nutrition Association President-Elect. "Federal nutrition standards require every school meal to be served with nutrient-rich milk. If the milk choices don't include flavored milk, many kids will choose to go without milk altogether, and we'll be missing an opportunity provide the nutrients that help them do their best. As schools work hard to cut calories from their menus - let's make sure we aren't cutting critical nutrients from our students' diets too."

Flavored Milk Contributions

Studies show that children who drink flavored milk meet more of their nutrient needs, do not consume more added sugar or fat, and are not heavier than non-milk drinkers. Flavored milk drinkers also drink fewer sodas and fruit drinks.

"Most kids are far from the recommended three servings of dairy a day for kids nine and older, and flavored milk drinkers drink more milk, so I think flavored milk is an acceptable strategy to help us increase milk consumption," said pediatrician Tanya Altmann, M.D. "Sure, I wish kids drank more white milk, and that's what I encourage at home, but if they're drinking milk with their meals at lunch and it happens to have 31 more calories than the unflavored version, I'm okay with that. What's at risk is that children will miss out on milk's nine essential nutrients if they won't drink the options provided."

--more--

The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association and other groups agree. In fact, these professional organizations believe that flavored milk is a positive trade-off for soft drinks, which are the primary source of added sugars in a child's diet. Flavored milk accounts for only 3% of total added sugars in children's diets.

"Unflavored milk is lower in sugar than flavored milk. However, given the importance of calcium, vitamin D and other key ingredients in the diet of children and adolescents, flavored milks could be a nice alternative since the contribution of added sugars to the overall diet of young children is minimal," according to a commentary written by two members of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition.⁴

Putting Flavored Milk in Perspective

"We should be focused on ways to encourage milk consumption, not implement policies that could backfire," said pediatric nutritionist Keith Ayoob, Ed.D., RD. "It's tragic to see the chronically low levels of calcium, vitamin D and other nutrients in young children and teens that could easily be increased if they simply drank more milk."

Ayoob believes there are several misconceptions about flavored milk. For instance, not all of the sugar you see on the label is "added sugar." Some of the total grams are naturally occurring lactose. For instance, a fat free chocolate milk with 143 calories and 24 grams of total sugars, includes only 12 grams of added sugar (or sucrose) per 8-ounce serving. The remaining sugar is the naturally-occurring lactose that's also found in white milk.

Despite some of the high-profile debates over flavored milk, a recent study of 1,000 moms found that more than half (54%) would be opposed to a decision made by their children's schools or school districts to stop offering chocolate milk.⁵ Parents say they want their children to learn to make choices for themselves and not have decisions made for them.

The survey found that parents appreciate that the availability of chocolate milk increases milk intake for some children who do not drink white milk.

For more information about flavored milk, including detailed findings of the research on flavored milk in schools, and tools and materials you can use, visit milkdelivers.org/schools/flavored-milk/.

SOURCES:

1. 2011-2012 Projected School Milk Product Profile, MilkPEP School Channel Survey, conducted by Prime Consulting Group, July, 2011. Responses were received from processors who collectively serve over 51,000, or 53% of all K-12 public schools. The MilkPEP Annual School Channel Survey is a joint project of the Milk Processor Education Program (MilkPEP), the National Dairy Council and the School Nutrition Association.
2. Patterson J, Sidel M. The removal of flavored milk in schools results in a reduction in total milk purchases in all grades, K-12. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2009; 109(9): A97.
3. The impact on student milk consumption and nutrient intakes from eliminating flavored milk in schools. 2009. MilkPEP research, conducted by Prime Consulting Group. Presented at the School Nutrition Association Annual National Conference, 2010.
4. Bhatia J, Greer FR. Clearing up confusion on role of dairy in children's diets. *AAP News*. 2007;28.
5. 1,000 interviews with moms of kids in grades K through 12 between 7/1/11 and 7/3/11. Conducted by KRC Research