



Minnesota  
Department  
of Health

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

## Yogurt

### April 2016 WIC Nutrition Topic of the Month

Yogurt was recently introduced as an option in the child and adult WIC food packages as a substitute for some of the fluid milk. Yogurt provides WIC participants more variety and flexibility to meet their family's preferences, and as a desirable milk alternative for participants who are not able to drink adequate milk due to lactose intolerance or other reasons. This fact sheet for CPAs focuses on answers to questions participants sometimes have about yogurt.

**Is yogurt healthier than milk and cheese? Is that why WIC is now offering it?** WIC is offering yogurt to increase variety and provide more options to WIC participants. Yogurt is made from milk, so it contains the same key nutrients—protein, calcium and potassium. Because some of the whey (liquid) is removed when making yogurt, it's a more concentrated source of nutrients than milk. This is sometimes beneficial for children with tiny appetites. Low-fat and nonfat yogurt contain less saturated fat and potential dioxins (1), and are lower in sodium than most cheeses. (2)

**What is the difference between Greek yogurt and regular yogurt?** More whey is removed when making Greek yogurt, resulting in a yogurt that is thicker and creamier in texture. On average, Greek yogurt has twice the amount of protein of regular yogurt and has less lactose and total sugar. Nutrient content will vary, so check the nutrition label. (2)

**Does yogurt have vitamin D?** Unlike fluid milk, which has vitamin D added, many WIC-allowed yogurts do not contain vitamin D. Check the food label.

**Is it hard to find a yogurt without gelatin?** Some yogurts do contain gelatin. Participants who follow a halal, kosher, vegetarian or vegan diet may want to avoid gelatin. If gelatin is a concern for a participant, show them how to read the ingredient list to identify whether gelatin is present or not. Because manufacturers frequently change product ingredients, reading the label is the most accurate way to determine this.

**Why aren't all yogurts WIC-allowed?** Only 32 oz. containers are allowed. WIC yogurts must also meet federal regulations, be made from cow's milk, and contain  $\leq 40$  gm of total sugar (about 10 tsp) per cup and no artificial sweeteners.

**Why are there so many carbohydrates in yogurt?** Yogurt contains natural carbohydrates from milk and any fruit that may be added. Plain yogurt contains only natural carbohydrates. Flavored yogurt usually has sugar added. Some fruit yogurts may state "lower in sugar" on the label. However, many of these are sweetened with artificial sweeteners, such as Splenda or Aspartame, and are not WIC-allowed.

**When can I introduce yogurt to my baby?** Yogurt is not part of the WIC food package until a baby's first birthday but small amounts of *unsweetened*, whole milk yogurt may be introduced after 6 months. (3) Encourage participants to not give "baby yogurts" since they tend to be full of sugar. If participants have concerns about allergies, they should talk to their doctor before introducing yogurt.

**How long does yogurt last once it is opened?** It is recommended that yogurt be used within seven days of opening. Remind participants to always use a clean spoon and scoop yogurt from the large container into a separate bowl—don't eat directly from the container. Store yogurt covered in the refrigerator at 40 degrees. The fermentation process used to make yogurt extends its shelf life in comparison to milk. An unopened container of yogurt will keep longer than an unopened container of milk. Look for the "Use By" date on the package.

**Why does liquid sometimes appear on top of yogurt?** The liquid that forms on top of the yogurt is whey, a natural constituent of milk. The liquid whey is safe to stir back into the yogurt to eat.

**Can I eat yogurt if I'm lactose intolerant?** Yogurt usually contains less lactose than milk, as well as live cultures that help in lactose digestion. Many people who are sensitive to lactose can eat yogurt, especially if it is eaten with a meal.

**I heard yogurt contains "probiotics". What are "probiotics"?** The word "probiotic" means "for life" and refers to living organisms that may have health benefits when eaten in adequate amounts. The biggest health benefit is associated with improving digestion, by populating the gut with "good" bacteria. Yogurt has probiotics (bacterial cultures) added to it during the fermentation process. Not all yogurts contain live bacteria cultures by the time the yogurt is packaged. Look for yogurts containing the graphic shown below, to assure you are getting the benefit from probiotics. (4)



**I've heard if I eat yogurt when I'm taking an antibiotic it might help me. Why?** Antibiotics taken for an illness, kill some of the intestinal flora (bacteria) in the gut, sometimes causing diarrhea. Eating yogurt with live bacterial culture can help repopulate the gut with "good" bacteria, which has been shown to reduce diarrhea in some cases. (4)

#### **What are some creative ways to use yogurt?**

- Top yogurt with your favorite WIC cereal and fruit for a yummy meal or snack.
- Serve fruit flavored yogurt as a dip with fresh fruit.
- Make a smoothie: ½ cup of WIC juice, ½ cup plain yogurt, ½-1 cup of your favorite frozen fruit.
- Make yogurt popsicles: Blend yogurt with fresh fruit. Pour into small plastic cups. Add a popsicle stick and freeze overnight.
- Substitute Greek yogurt for any recipe that calls for sour cream. Or use half yogurt and half sour cream for a lower fat sour cream.

#### **Practice tips:**

- At subsequent visits ask if the participant was able to find the yogurt that she wanted
- If a participant is having difficulty finding a WIC-allowed yogurt, use a pictorial to identify one that she likes or that might be found at the store where she shops.
- Use empty cartons to demonstrate where to find "32 oz." on the label, as well as any other useful information, such as vitamin D, sucralose, gelatin, etc., based on the participant's specific needs. Visuals are especially helpful for new participants and those with Limited English Proficiency.
- If the participant is interested in the WIC Food Finder phone app, help her download it while in the WIC office and demonstrate how to use it with a sample WIC food container.
- If the participant is struggling with how to use the yogurt in her food package, check and see if she might prefer a different food package.

**References:**

- [WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change](#)
- [USDA Nutrient Database](#)
- [AAP Healthy Children Newsletter](#)
- [Probiotics may help prevent antibiotic induced diarrhea](#)

For more information on MN WIC Allowed yogurt brands and about selecting a food package that contains yogurt, please review the following MN WIC communications:

[UPC Product Listing for Yogurt](#) (this is an up-to-date listing of WIC yogurts)

