



### Yogurt getting more popular, less healthy

Do you eat yogurt? What used to be considered a strange sour milk product eaten only by hippies and health freaks is now a common supermarket item and serious big business.

**Question:** Why is the popularity of yogurt growing?

**Answer:** Probably for two major reasons: People have grown to perceive yogurt as always healthful, and commercial yogurt products are sweeter and creamier than their ancestors.

**Q:** How did yogurt get a healthful image?

**A:** The probiotic qualities of yogurt (containing live microorganisms beneficial for the gastrointestinal tract) are a key reason health professionals recommended yogurt after taking antibiotics. Eating yogurt after a course of antibiotics can help to replace good bacteria killed by the drug.

Also, yogurt is a convenient high-calcium food. With the incidence of osteoporosis growing, many individuals who don't like milk find yogurt an enjoyable calcium equivalent.

And many weight-conscious people view yogurt as a nutritious alternative to ice cream.

**Q:** Do today's yogurt products provide the same health benefits as the types made in the past?

**A:** The answer depends on the individual product. Many yogurt products do not meet all the criteria for the health benefits previously extolled by health professionals.

Yogurt seems to be taking on a new marketplace image. It is often promoted as a treat verging on decadence. Yogurt promoters seem to be banking on individuals continuing to view all yogurt products as guilt-free healthful ice cream substitutes. Based on the sales growth for yogurt and yogurt drinks over the last year, this approach is working well.

**Q:** Are all yogurt products created equal?

**A:** No. However, it is difficult to compare products, partly because of the many different single-serving container sizes. Also, new whipped, custard, and cookie-crumble

versions can be nutritionally different from their standard counterparts. Although they carry the yogurt image, they may not deliver the same nutrition. Take the new Dannon La Crème line. Ounce for ounce, its calorie, fat and sugar content is almost indistinguishable from a McDonald's shake. But it does contain live yogurt cultures.

The 4-ounce new Yoplait low-fat mousse flavors are whipped with air to give them a light feel. But a serving contains only 50 percent of the calcium in regular yogurts and, ounce for ounce, it has about twice the added sugar.

The Yofarm brand with Oreo cookie crumbles bills itself as low-fat, but after adding the cookie crumbles, it no longer meets that strict definition.

Overall, most yogurt products deliver a balance of important nutrients along with beneficial bacterial cultures. But some new styles are not nutritionally equivalent to their predecessors.

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