

# Healthful Eating

## Dairy Foods Provide Affordable Health Benefits Important Findings for Children and Adults

(NAPSA)—The economy has Americans digging deeper to save money, so it is more important than ever to make nutritious choices without putting additional strain on the wallet. The timing couldn't be worse, as many Americans are overweight, yet undernourished when it comes to critical nutrients. As a nation with a calorie surplus, it's time to invest in our health by focusing on nutrient-rich foods that provide more nutrition per calorie and per penny. Fortunately, nutrient-rich dairy foods remain an affordable choice for people looking to get more nutrients for their dollar.

"Americans are striving to improve nutrition and healthy eating habits," says Dr. Penny M. Kris-Etherton, Ph.D., RD, professor of nutrition at Pennsylvania State University. "The review of research featured in the current issue of the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* (JACN) underscores the importance of dairy foods in a daily diet."

Together, low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt provide a unique package of nine essential nutrients at a low cost per serving—calcium, potassium, phosphorus, protein, vitamins A, D and B12, riboflavin and niacin (niacin equivalents). While the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends those ages 9 and older consume three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy foods each day, Americans on average consume only half of the recommendation each day. Research featured in the JACN supplement shows consuming more dairy foods:

- **Helps kids meet nutrient needs.** Concern over child nutrition is at an all-time high and children between the ages of 9 and 18 need, on average, four servings of dairy a day to meet calcium recommendations and at least three servings to meet magnesium recommendations.

- **Strengthens bones.** Dairy foods contribute to bone health at



every age. Three servings of dairy foods each day help provide the bone-building nutrients calcium, protein and vitamin D, which are important for strong bones.

- **Assists in maintaining a healthy weight.** A diet containing three daily servings of dairy foods has a favorable impact on body weight and composition compared to diets containing less than the recommended amount.

- **Builds a more balanced diet.** Together, dairy foods provide the nutrients Americans do not consume enough of, like calcium, potassium and magnesium. The most practical way to help meet nutrient recommendations may be to add an extra serving of dairy foods to the suggested daily intake.

- **Helps maintain a healthy blood pressure.** Low-fat and fat-free dairy foods play a key role in the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, which has been shown to lower blood pressure and prevent hypertension. Low-fat diets including a combination of fruits, vegetables and dairy products produce the greatest reduction in blood pressure compared to diets high only in fruits and vegetables.

For more information on the health benefits of dairy foods, visit [www.NationalDairyCouncil.org](http://www.NationalDairyCouncil.org).