

# Facts on the Health Benefits of Yogurt

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## 1. Live Cultures in Yogurt Improve Digestion, Immune System

Two live cultures, *L. bulgaricus* and *S. thermophilus*, are used to make yogurt in the United States. Many yogurts include the addition of other probiotic cultures; usually *L. acidophilus*, *Bifidus*, *L. casei*, and *L. rhamnosus*. These bacteria strains improve gut conditions, aid digestion, improve digestibility of lactose, strengthen the immune system and may help combat vaginal [yeast infections](#). Many who are lactose-intolerant and can't drink milk are able to eat yogurt, thanks to the work of the bacterial cultures.

## 2. Yogurt Provides Calcium and Protein

Four ounces of yogurt provides 12 percent of the recommended daily allowance of calcium, as well as 3.5g of protein. Calcium is essential for strong bones and yogurt is a very good source of it; the digestibility of yogurt makes this a great choice.

## 3. Whole Milk Yogurt Is Good for You

While much mainstream nutritional advice calls for low-fat diets, credible research highlighted by the nonprofit Weston A. Price Foundation finds that milk fat has exceptional positive qualities and stores much of the vitamins and nutrients found in milk. Look for a non-homogenized variety with "cream on the top" for maximum health benefits (homogenized cream is harder to digest and assimilate).

## 4. Avoid Sweetened and Sugar-Free Yogurt

For maximum health benefits, don't buy yogurt with natural or artificial sweeteners, sugar, artificial color and other additives, or even "natural flavor." Stick with plain yogurt, and add your own chopped fruit, granola or vanilla extract for taste if you don't care for the sourness. Especially avoid yogurt with high fructose corn syrup, which is completely unhealthy. Sugary yogurt snacks add many extra "bad" calories to your diet; you're much better off chopping up some grapes to add to plain yogurt.

## 5. You Can Make Your Own Yogurt with Fresh Milk

If you're lucky enough to have access to fresh milk, especially unpasteurized, un-homogenized milk, make your own yogurt and you can save money and have the freshest yogurt around. Simply heat a quart of milk, bringing it to 140 degrees F to kill bacteria. Allow the milk to cool slightly, to 110 degrees F before adding 1/4 cup of quality yogurt, which is the starter culture. Leave it in a warm spot (thermos or yogurt maker) for 8 hours before cooling to eat.

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/948-facts-health-benefits-yogurt/>