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# Lowfat Milk May Not Be As Healthy As We Thought, Says Harvard Expert



Milk may not be doing you as much good as you think (photo: Wikimedia)

Got milk? Well, you might not really need it, according to the current issue of JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association) [Pediatrics](#). Reduced-fat milk is high in sugar and may be contributing to the obesity epidemic, argues Harvard professor of pediatrics David Ludwig, MD.

One cup of 2-percent milk contains 12.3 grams of sugar, more than a Reeses Peanut Butter Cup and almost as much as a chocolate chip cookie. Consider that the [recommendations for sugar intake](#) call for just 12 grams a day (three teaspoons, at 4 grams each) for children. So one serving of milk a day would put a child over the limit, two cups a day would top a woman's limit of 5 teaspoons, and three cups a day would top a man's limit of 8-9 teaspoons.



Schoolgirls in England enjoy a milk break, 1944 (photo: Wikimedi

A glass of lowfat milk also provides 122 calories, which may not sound like that much, but by the time you've drunk your three servings that's 366 calories that might be better used elsewhere.

In fact, Ludwig says, humans evolved on a diet free of milk, and milk consumption in general is nutritionally unnecessary, as a healthy diet can provide adequate calcium through beans, nuts, green leafy vegetables, and certain types of fish. (Of course, ask any parent; getting kids to eat greens, nuts and fish is another story.)

Recently revised [guidelines](#) from the USDA and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), which call for three glasses of reduced-fat milk a day, should be reconsidered, the study argues. The guidelines were drafted with the intent to discourage the consumption of sugary beverages, with the exception of reduced fat milk. That exception may be misguided, opine the study's authors, who also include noted Harvard nutritionist Walter Willett, MD.

Ludwig, a pediatric endocrinologist with a PhD in nutrition, specializes in childhood obesity. He also developed the popular [Optimal Weight for Life \(OWL\) program](#) for kids at Boston Children's Hospital. He has published [several studies](#) showing that a low glycemic (low sugar) diet may be more effective than a low-fat diet for weight loss in children.

Source: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/melaniehaiken/2013/07/02/lowfat-milk-may-not-be-as-healthy-as-we-thought-says-harvard-expert/>