

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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## *“Dairy Products Found Safe in New Study”*

Past research has shown that diets with high levels of saturated fats, like cheese, butter, and whole milk, can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, such as heart disease and stroke. Some studies have found that saturated fats have also been linked to increased mortality rates. The USDA highlights that it is important to choose low-fat or fat-free foods from the dairy group because foods high in saturated fats and cholesterol have adverse health implications. However, dairy products contain many nutrients like calcium that have health benefits. Still, a raging dietary controversy surrounds the benefits or harms of consuming dairy products. In some parts of the world, dairy has been consumed for thousands of years, and research has shown that genes have altered in humans to accommodate dairy consumption. Evidence shows that we have genetically adapted to eat dairy and indicates that it may now be natural for us to eat and drink it. The USDA reports that dairy products are the primary source of calcium in the American diet. Whole milk and many dairy products are high in saturated fat. But, even this assertion is mired in conflicted studies. Many studies have found no link between dietary saturated fat and an increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and cardiovascular disease. A research team led by Dr. Marcia C. de Oliveira Otto at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian of Tufts University explored the connections between dairy fatty acids and cardiovascular disease and death. The team assessed three fatty acids that reflect dairy intake (pentadecanoic, heptadecanoic, and trans-palmitoleic fatty acids) in blood samples obtained at the start, at 6 years, and at 13 years. The results appeared online in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* on July 11, 2018. They found no significant links between overall risk of death and long-term exposure to the three dairy fatty acids. The findings support a growing body of evidence that suggests dairy fat does not increase the risk of heart disease or overall mortality in older adults. The USDA says that calcium helps to build bones and teeth, maintain bone mass, improve bone health, decrease the risk of osteoporosis and, what is more, diets that have an intake of three cups of dairy products per day can improve bone mass, which is particularly important to bone health during childhood and adolescence - a time when bone mass is being built.

In the America that I love, we realize that we can benefit from a range of delicious and nutritious dairy products. Nutritional and dietary recommendations are circumspect and filled with controversies. Dietitians and nutritionists change their minds and opinions more than the local weatherman.

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