

LIFE

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There's an alternative dairy product for you

By Juliana Goodwin  
Gannett News Service  
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When Tony Fronce of Springfield, Mo., heard goat's milk was easier to digest than cow's milk, he gave it a try because cow's milk sometimes bothered his stomach. That was eight years ago, and he's been drinking goat milk ever since.

"A lot of people are lactose-intolerant. Goat is easier on the stomach than cow. Soy satisfies their craving for milk, thick and creamy, but they don't have the reaction," says Jim Nail, an employee at Mama Jean's Natural Food Market in Springfield.

These days there's an alternative form of dairy for just about everyone. Lactose-intolerant? Try soy milk. Soy allergy? Give rice milk a try. Need milk packed with protein? Sheep milk has almost double the amount of protein as cow milk. So how do you know what is best for your lifestyle? Here's a breakdown of benefits and downsides of different forms of dairy.

Soy and rice

Soy and rice milk may appeal to vegetarians, vegans or people who are lactose-intolerant, says Terry Egan, nutrition and health education specialist with the University of Missouri extension.

"Soy and rice don't have lactose because they are from plant sources," Egan says. "Rice versus soy is more of a taste preference. If you don't like the taste of soy, you might try rice."

Soy is the closest nutritionally to cow's milk, Egan says.

One advantage of soy is it contains isoflavins, which help lower bad cholesterol, says Lisa Frazier, a registered dietitian at Skaggs Community Health Center in Branson, Mo.

Thanks to the isoflavins, soy is good for your heart. "(They are) in all soy products," Frazier says.

Soy has virtually no saturated fat and is cholesterol-free, says Kathryn Fleming, dietitian with CoxHealth. However, soy milk has twice as much fat as rice milk: 4 grams per cup versus 2 grams per cup.

Soy has about a third as many carbohydrates as rice milk -- 8 grams versus 24.8 grams -- according to information from [www.caloriecount.com](#), an online resource that tracks nutritional information and grades foods.

Soy milk also has 7 grams of protein versus 0.4 grams in rice milk, according to the Web site.

Sheep and goat

Most people don't want or need to increase their fat intake, but those who do want a high-fat and high-protein drink will find it in sheep's milk.

"Sheep's milk is very rich. Whereas cow's milk has 8 grams of fat per cup, sheep has 17 grams," Frazier says. Sheep's milk also has more calories: 260 per cup, whereas cow's milk has 150, she says.

Sheep's milk has more protein than cow's milk -- almost twice as much -- and also has more calcium.

Sheep's milk is low in sodium, has no sugar and is high in phosphorus, riboflavin, calcium and vitamin B12 -- but it is also high in saturated fat.

"Technically, someone who is lactose-intolerant shouldn't be able to (digest goat milk), but I can tell you from working with clients some people who can't tolerate cow's milk can tolerate goat's milk. Goat's milk has a different fatty-acid profile," Fleming says.

If your allergy to cow's milk is severe, it may not be worth trying goat's milk because you may have a similar reaction. If your reaction is a simple stomachache, then give goat's milk a try, Frazier suggests.

Goat's milk and whole milk from a cow are similar when it comes to calories, although lower-fat varieties of cow's milk are lower in calories, says Egan.



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Goat's milk is an alternative to cow's milk.

WHAT IS LACTOSE INTOLERANCE?

Lactose intolerance, also called lactase deficiency, means you aren't able to fully digest milk sugar (lactose) in dairy products. It occurs in those who lack lactase, an enzyme produced in the small intestine. It's not the same as an allergy, because it doesn't involve the body's immune system.

The signs and symptoms of lactose intolerance usually begin 30 minutes to two hours after eating or drinking foods that contain lactose. Common signs and symptoms include diarrhea, nausea, abdominal cramps, bloating and gas.

The condition generally starts in adolescence or early adulthood and is more common in black, Asian, Hispanic and American Indian populations.

You can control symptoms of lactose intolerance through a diet that limits lactose without cutting out calcium, and possibly by taking supplements such as enzyme tablets or probiotics. If you suspect you are lactose-intolerant, let your doctor diagnose the condition; there are tests that can confirm it.

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Goat's milk is higher in fat than cow milk, with about 10 grams per cup.





Goat's milk may have health benefits: A study from the University of Granada in Spain implied goat's milk could prevent anemia and demineralization (softening of the bones) better than cow's milk. The study was conducted on rats; further study on humans would be needed to conclude if people would share the same benefits. If they do, goat's milk could potentially benefit osteoporosis patients or people with anemia, Frazier says.

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