Source:



Author: Regina Lavelle Date: 12/02/2019

Title: Are plant-based milks any good, or are you better off just having a bowl of porridge? - Irish experts give their verdicts

Text:

Say you drink coffee and you want to buy a creamer, so you go into a supermarket. There are two products on offer - one costs €1.05 for a litre. The other costs €1.71. You might say that's nuts. And if you did, you'd be right. That's how much an online supermarket charges for one litre of ordinary milk and one litre of unsweetened almond milk.

And where once even asking for skinny milk would invite snorts of derision, now there is an entire menu of non-animal 'milks' covering everything from soy to rice, cashew, almond, oat and coconut.

It's worth noting here that while these products are commonly thought of as milks, they are not allowed to describe themselves as such. EU rules prohibit it.

But each has its own pedigree and usage recommendations, with coconut milk best for curries, for example, and cashew milk suggested for making ice cream. And while their advocates once belonged to a fairly niche cohort, this is changing. According to figures published yesterday by Kantar, the retail experts, Irish sales of plant-based milks were up 40pc in January, when compared to the same period last year.

The figures reflect the growing popularity of the Veganuary campaign, which encourages people to adopt a plant-based diet for January. However, that is not the only factor - Kantar told the Irish Independent that a nine per cent increase in plant-based milk sales was recorded in the 52 weeks to the end of January this year. More generally, there is a slow but steady drift away from

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dairy, thanks to the growing numbers who identify as lactose intolerant and to the perceived health and environmental benefits of a plant-based diet.

But are consumers doing the right thing by choosing plant-based milks?

"It's like a trend to be honest," says Professor Clare Corish, Associate Professor of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics and Programme Director of the MSc in the field at UCD. "There's no evidence for their use. There is a lot of work on sustainable eating and sustainable environment and we're probably better to eat more fruit and vegetables, but it seems to have grown arms and legs, and that somehow you shouldn't have dairy produce and should only have oat milks. But dairy products are a really great source of calcium and of bio-available calcium. This plant-milk stuff seems to be down to something in the ether because milk is a cheap and healthy food."

The increasing market for these products is particularly noteworthy for Ireland, traditionally one of the biggest consumers of milk. Research published by the Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada in 2016 showed that Ireland topped a table of European, North American, and Australian milk consumption with 125 litres per capita, only Finland came close at 120 litres. Last year's Behaviour and Attitudes survey showed that the average weekly household consumption of milk stands at 6.2 litres. And given the primacy of our agricultural industry here, any move away from milk feels significant. But while few question the health benefits of a plant-based diet, there are certain nutritional benefits to milk for which it is difficult, or at least complicated, to compensate for.

"The big one is calcium. The one people are less aware of is iodine. There's vitamin B12, vitamin B2, there's protein," says qualified dietician Sarah Keogh. "There's a whole package of nutrients which is why nut milks are not allowed to call themselves milk. They're a milk alternative or a squash."

"Vitamin B12 is found mainly in animal products, meat and dairy," she says. "If someone is going fully plant-based, it's usually recommended they take a supplement or eat foods fortified with B12. You need B12 for healthy blood - to make red blood cells, nerves and brain function. There can be an assumption that because these products are known as 'milks' that you're automatically getting calcium, but they're pretty low in calcium.

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"If someone is going to use a plant-based product, whether it's soy or almond-based, the advice is to read the label carefully and make sure a calcium has been added to it. If you eat fish, then you can solve it with sardines - a tin of sardines has about the same amount of calcium as two glasses of milk, as long as you eat them with the bones.

"Iodine is needed for brain development, particularly during pregnancy. And really you only get it naturally in fish and Irish people tend not to be great fish eaters."

The way milk is processed in Ireland, iodine is added as part of that.

"You will get plenty of iodine in seaweed, in nori, dulsk, kelp. So if you're not getting it in any of those, you'll probably need a supplement," says Keogh.

For some, however, it is less about the science and more about the "clean eating" says Danielle Logue, a UCD PhD candidate in sports science who is studying these kinds of products in her research.

"You only have to go online to see everyone talking about clean eating - it's the new mantra. You have to eat pure and clean, and there is a sense that dairy does not conform. But dairy is nutrition rich."

Professor Corish points to the nutritional make-up of some of these milks, which contain a higher proportion of water as their primary ingredient.

"Almond milk is 2.3pc almond and the first ingredient is water. Oat milk is water, 10pc oats and then sunflower oil. You'd be better off having a bowl of porridge.

"There's also huge commercial interest. There's a lot of money being made by a lot of companies selling those products."

Keogh does say that most vegans are relatively well-educated on diet, and are pragmatic when it comes to addressing any dietary deficiencies, but there can be exceptions.

And these appear to arise where a vegan diet has been adopted for its perceived "natural" qualities. It is here that the circulation of questionable nutritional science may be responsible for some eyebrow-raising theories

Text:

"Teenagers who want to go fully plant-based may have been reading blogs that aren't very reliable and there's a bit of resistance to taking the supplements," she says. "The latest is that that B12 is naturally in our soil, so if you don't wash your fruit and vegetables and you leave them with the muck on, you're getting your B12. The vast majority who are going fully vegan need to eat foods that B12 has been added to or they take a supplement.

"They're equating being on the vegan diet with being 'all natural' and that being vegan is part of a 'natural' diet. However, most people are well aware of what's required."

But in the absence of concrete scientific or nutritional evidence to support the diversion from milk, Professor Corish says that more research is needed.

"Nobody has looked into why people are so obsessed with this."

But UCD researcher Logue says that "anecdotally", the rise of plant-based milks could be a worrying fad. "It's a lot of young females online. There's a lot of access to misinformation."

Initial thoughts:

Analyse this text:

WHO?

* Who wrote this?
* Is their name attributed?
* Are they an academic or expert?
* Could they be biased?
* Are they an advocate or campaigner?
* Are they independent and objective or subjective?
* Does the story cite a number of sources?
* Do these sources appear in other articles?
* Are contrasting views offered for balance?

What?

* What did they say?
* What is the agenda?
* What is the context?
* What type of story is it?
* Does it seem like clickbait or an extreme viewpoint?

Where?

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* Does it say something like ‘the truth about…’ or ‘The government doesn’t want you to know this…’

Is the information in this article factual?

Final thoughts:

Author: Trine Jensen-Burke

Date: 2016

# Title: Do you want fresh and luminous skin? Ditch the sugar

Source:



Text:

Have you invested good money in expensive skincare products, yet feel like your skin *still* isn't looking luminous and gorgeous – like the packaging promised?

The thing is, *how* your skin looks and feels is actually more of an *inside* job, and anything you apply on top of it simply isn't going to do anything for you unless you nourish it correctly.

And do you know what your skin's number one enemy is? Apart from the sun and those dangerous rays, *sugar*actually plays complete havoc with your looks, causing wrinkles, uneven skin tone and premature skin ageing. Yikes.

When we eat sugar, the sugar molecules bombard our cells like a ferocious hail storm, bonding with fats and proteins. The proteins then become misshapen and excrete exotoxins that disrupt cellular metabolism. Collagen (which is what makes our skin look smooth and plump) is a protein that’s particularly vulnerable to glycation. The damage this is doing manifests itself as wrinkles, lines and discoloration.

Meaning, of course, that you can buy expensive creams by the bucket load, but they are not going to do *anything* for your face if you keep eating a diet high in sugar.

The big problem? Sugar lurks in so many products we consume on a daily basis, so even if you are trying to avoid sweets and added sugar, chances are you are still getting a considerable amount of it every day. A common culprit is the sugars found in low-fat diet foods, breakfast cereals, fruit juice, in many types of bread and sauces including pasta, sweet chilli, balsamic vinegar and of course carbonated drinks and alcohol.

Text:

Oh, and if you are prone to breakouts, be aware that sugar can also promote acne by elevating blood sugar levels. Raised blood sugar levels result in a cascade of hormonal effects, including increased androgens (acne-causing hormones) which can stimulate excess oil flow which can lead to clogged pores and breakouts.

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Final thoughts:

Source:



Author: Rosanna Davison

Date: 23/09/2019

# Title: Does Gut Health = Good Health?

Text:

The past decade has witnessed an evolving body of scientific research investigating potential links between human gut health and mood, immunity and overall physical health. Indeed, the gut-brain axis has been the focus of extensive recent research, and various studies have explored the health of our intestinal microbiota (the collection of microorganisms that live within us) and the possible link to various mood disorders, including symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Immune system function has been linked with digestive health and research has considered the role that gut microbiota may play in the development and function of the immune system. Normal gut function can support the digestion and absorption of nutrients from the foods you eat everyday and this in turn may affect your energy levels, immune system and may even help to support hair and skin health. Within the lining of the digestive tract are specialist immune cells designed to protect your body from infection and deal with bacteria ingested in food to prevent them from entering systemic circulation and causing illness. In fact, up to 80% of your immune system is thought to reside in the gut. Maintaining optimal gut health can support the immune cells and help to ensure they’re at their most effective. ‘Dysbiosis’ is the term used to describe an overgrowth of ‘unfriendly’ bacteria in the gut and the most common symptoms include bloating, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, excessive flatulence and stomach pains. Recurrent colds may indicate that there’s an imbalance in digestive health.

Three key ways to support the ‘friendly’ bacteria in your gut:

1. Fibre-rich plant foods: Aim to include a wide range of vibrant plant-based foods in your daily diet, including fruits and vegetables, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds and whole grains. Fresh vegetables and fruits are packed with

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vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, but their rich variety of different types of fibre help to support a varied and healthy microbiome. Try eating seven to nine portions over the course of each day and choose different colours to nourish your body with a range of protective phytonutrients. Raw onion, and garlic, chicory, Jerusalem artichoke, leeks and bananas contain prebiotic fibres, which feed the friendly bacteria in your gut and encourage it to flourish.

**2. Microbiotics:** For many years, Udo’s Choice Super 8 capsules have been my top choice for premium-quality, friendly bacteria. Super 8 can be used on a continuous basis or for short periods of time, such as after illness, to help to replenish the balance of ‘friendly bacteria’. Udo’s Choice Super 8 is a hi-count microbiotic blend that contains eight strains of lacto and bifido bacteria. Each daily capsule contains 42 billion ‘friendly’ bacteria. Make sure you store them in the fridge to keep them fresh and aim to take them after your evening meal for best absorption.

**3. Avoid refined sugar and processed foods:** Refined sugar is thought to encourage the growth of various strains of yeasts and ‘unfriendly’ bacteria, while processed foods often contain refined sugar to enhance taste and encourage you to reach for more. As much as possible, aim to buy and eat fresh, seasonal produce to support a healthy microbiota. If you have a sweet tooth, try eating berries as they’re rich in antioxidants and naturally low in fructose. Raw cacao powder can be used instead of chocolate in a range of healthier desserts and sweet treats, while Stevia and Erythritol are useful plant-derived natural sweeteners that don’t impact blood sugar levels.

Trust your gut and support it with friendly bacteria each day.

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