



Craving creamy drinks seems natural with mother's milk being our first food. But cow's milk isn't ideal for those with lactose intolerance, high cholesterol or vegans. Naturopath **Caroline Robertson** investigates delicious, healthy dairy-free alternatives.

Milk is an elixir when taken from a loved animal, in its pure form. It promotes sleep thanks to soothing sedatives tryptophan and lactum. Ayurvedic doctor Rama Prasad advises, "Organic milk is wonderful for weight gain and relaxation. Half a cup of warm milk with a pinch of nutmeg and ginger an hour before bed gives deep sleep."

Organic milk was found to have higher concentrations of omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants according to two studies from Newcastle University, England. However when pasteurised and homogenised it

loses much of its digestive enzymes and nutrients justifying fortification. Many have moved away from milk because of lactose intolerance causing bloat, gas, cramps and diarrhoea. Though milk has high calcium it may leech calcium from bones in order to buffer its acidity and high phosphorus content.

A 12-year Harvard Nurses' Health Study on 77,761 women found those who consumed the most milk broke more bones than those who rarely drank dairy – questioning the age old belief that milk gives you strong bones. Milk that is raw, unsweetened, fermented or cultured such as yoghurt, kefir, and sour cream are acid neutral and may not cause the same issues as regular milk.

Healthy dairy-free alternatives:

Goat's milk contains equivalent calcium and protein to cow's but has different fats, smaller proteins, lower lactose and less acidity. This makes it closer to mother's milk than dairy hence is often easier to digest and a viable option for babies.

Coconut milk is fantastic for the skin, hair, heart and immune system. Coconut milk has healthy

medium chain fatty acids which are easily metabolised and don't raise cholesterol. It also contains capric acid and lauric acid which fight fungus, bacteria and viruses. It's packed with fibre, vitamins and minerals. Coconut's fatty acids feed glossy hair and smooth skin. Luckily it's lactose free though it has a little fructose that's problematic for some. Make your own coconut milk by soaking two cups desiccated coconut in four cups warm water for an hour and blend. Strain through cheesecloth and store in the fridge to use within three days.



Soy milk in moderation is an amazing muscle food. It makes a nutritious smoothie with eight grams of protein packed into every 250ml. Soy is lactose free, low in polyunsaturated fat, high in fibre, calcium, vitamins A, B12, D, potassium plus isoflavones helpful for menopause. Unless you're allergic to soy, it's suitable in moderate amounts of a cup a day.

Prefer the brands that are free of GMO soybeans, oil and sugar. Conflicting studies have people soy confused. Some conclude that soy intake increases breast cancer and others found it decreased incidence. Soy does bind to estrogen receptors which can disrupt hormone production so it's more suitable for adults. However it was only found to lower sperm counts and affect fertility in high doses. Soy also contains phytic acid but 90 per cent of this is leached out during its preparation. Soya's goitrogens that can depress thyroid function are also reduced by heating. Recent research revealed that as long as one has enough iodine soy won't adversely affect thyroid function.

Oat milk can help heart disease, lower cholesterol and clear constipation with its high fibre, folic acid, vitamin E and phytochemicals. It has higher protein than almond or rice milk and lower sugar but is high in carbohydrates and gluten. Calming oat milk is a good option for elderly without gluten, blood glucose or weight issues.

Rice milk is a more watery milk suitable for those with nut or lactose allergies. Rice milk is often enriched with calcium, protein and vitamin D. Diabetics should be aware that it has a high glycaemic index.

Quinoa milk is high in protein, manganese, magnesium, fibre and antioxidants. It's gluten and lactose free.

Make a home brew by soaking one cup quinoa in fridge overnight. Drain and cook in two cups water for 15 minutes. Blend till smooth with 2-6 cups water to your desired consistency. Strain through cheesecloth and add one teaspoon vanilla and one tablespoon agave for extra flavour.

Almond milk is advocated in Ayurvedic medicine as an aphrodisiac and immune booster. It's nutty flavour and smoothness makes it great for desserts and drinks. The ticks for almond milk are rich vitamin D, antioxidants and iron content. Unlike dairy it has no lactose, cholesterol or saturated fats so is low calorie. Almond milk's minus is lack of protein and calcium however brands often add this. Watch out for oil, sugar and salt in commercial cartons.

If you suffer from herpes be aware that almond's high arginine can bring on an outbreak, however leaving on the skin may help as a study at the UK's Institute of Food Research found skins reduce HSV proliferation. Almond milk is alkalising along with coconut milk whereas milks made from dairy, rice, oats and soya are acidic. ☺


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Make your own almond milk
 Soak 1 cup almonds in fridge for 6 hours. Remove skin and drain water. Blend with three cups pure water and strain through cheesecloth. Refrigerate in sealed glass container for up to four days. For extra sweetness add a pinch of saffron, cardamom and two dates.



BECOME A GINGERHOLIC THIS WINTER

- Ginger is beneficial for colds and flu, circulation, digestion and nausea
- When the cold wind blows serve into a cup of hot water as a tea or a toddy
- Sip neat, on the rocks, as a mixer or into your favourite tippie
- Mixed in with sparkling mineral water, fresh mint and slices of orange or lime
- Awarded Best Non-Alcoholic Drink at the World Natural Beverage Awards
- **Now available at your local Go Vita store!**
- For more information visit www.rochesterginger.com.au
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