

Yogurt – The Fabulous Function Food

The Best

You can't beat a cup of plain low-fat or fat-free yogurt. It can have as much as 400 mg of calcium—40 percent of the Daily Value (DV)—more than a glass of 1% or fat-free milk (30 to 35 percent of the DV). And, like milk, it also has protein, B-12, riboflavin, potassium, magnesium, and zinc. The only exception: Yogurt has no vitamin D because, unlike milk, it's not fortified.

What's more, people who have trouble digesting lactose (the naturally occurring sugar in milk) should have no problem with yogurt. The "live and active cultures" digest the lactose for you.

Whether those *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*—the bacteria in yogurt—have other benefits is unclear. But even if they don't, yogurt's still a bargain. All those nutrients for just over 100 calories is a steal.

Yogurt's natural tartness makes it a perfect foil for a sweet, ripe banana, juicy fresh (or frozen) berries, or even canned (unsweetened) pineapples or peaches. Throw it in the blender or spoon it into a bowl. Either way, you get one of the five daily servings of fresh fruit that could cut your risk of cancer.

The Next Best

People who would never let a sip of chocolate milk cross their lips think nothing of eating a cup of sweetened yogurt. Yet an eight-ounce cup of Dannon Lowfat fruit-on-the-bottom has six teaspoons of added sugar. A glass of Hershey's Chocolate Fat Free Milk has four.

Now you're talking 240 calories in a snack that many people gulp down in 240 seconds. You could have spent the 100 calories from the added sugar on a banana or a couple of cups of low-fat microwave popcorn.

Judging by the calories in other brands—whose manufacturers are more secretive than Dannon—six teaspoons of sugar is par for the course for yogurts with fruit. (Flavored yogurts like coffee, vanilla, and lemon may have "only" four teaspoons.)

All that sugar means more calories and less calcium-rich yogurt. Since the calcium comes from milk, that means you're also getting less potassium, magnesium, zinc, etc. Plus, the sweeter the yogurt, the less likely you are to add your own fruit.

Still, if it's a choice between sweetened yogurt and no yogurt, get the sweetened. Just try to pick the best ones. That means the most calcium and fruit and the least added sugar.

But while food labels list calcium and sugar, there's no way to tell how much of the sugar comes from the milk and fruit and how much is added. So Honorable Mentions go to yogurts that kept the calcium up to at least 300 mg (30 percent of the Daily Value) in eight ounces.

Just because a yogurt didn't make an Honorable Mention doesn't mean it's dishonorable. More than a few just missed the cutoff for calcium. When push comes to shove, most yogurts are more nutritious than most ice creams, frozen yogurts, or prepared puddings.

One more thing: If coffee's your flavor, you may end up with an unwanted shot of caffeine. And, in most cases, there's nothing on the label to clue you in. For the record, an eight-ounce container of Dannon Lowfat Coffee Yogurt contains 45 mg of caffeine. That's about what you'd get in half a cup of brewed coffee. Six ounces of Horizon Organic Nonfat Cappuccino have 25 mg. Dannon Light Cappuccino and Stonyfield Farm Nonfat Cappuccino have none.

The Least Best

Why did some lines strike out? (1) Too little calcium. A few brands—like Colombo, Jell-O, Light n' Lively, SnackWell's, and some lines of Breyers—had less calcium than their competitors. Is that because they have more sugar? Or is it because other brands have more milk solids? The companies won't say. (2) Artificial sweeteners. Though the aspartame (NutraSweet) in "light" yogurts cuts calories to 100 or less, its safety isn't 100 percent certain. (3) Heat-treatment. SnackWell's is heat-treated to get rid of the off-flavors that arise when chocolate mixes with the acid made by yogurt's beneficial bacteria. Unfortunately, the heat also kills the bacteria.

Ranking

Best Bites (✓) are plain (no sugar or artificial sweeteners added). Honorable Mentions (◆) went to (non-artificially) sweetened yogurts that contain at least 30 percent of the Daily Value (DV) for calcium in eight ounces (or 25 percent of the DV in six ounces or 15 percent of the DV in 4.4 or 4 ounces). The list included only fat-free or low-fat yogurts. They're listed from highest percent DV for calcium to lowest.

	Yogurt (8-oz. containers)	Calories	Calcium (%DV)
✓	Dannon Fat Free, plain	110	40
✓	Dannon Lowfat, plain	140	40
◆	Dannon Lowfat, Coffee, Cranberry-Raspberry, Lemon, Vanilla ¹	210	40
	Colombo Light* ²	100	35

	Dannon Light* ²	100	35
✓	Stonyfield Farm Nonfat, plain	100	35
✓	Alta Dena Nonfat, plain	110	35
✓	Brown Cow Farm Fat Free, plain	110	35
	Dannon Light, with crunchies* ²	140	35
◆	Alta Dena Nonfat, Vanilla	160	35
◆	Stonyfield Farm Nonfat, Cappuccino, French Vanilla, Lotsa Lemon ¹	160	35
◆	Breyers Lowfat, Vanilla	220	35
◆	Dannon Lowfat, fruit on the bottom ²	240	35
◆	Stonyfield Farm Nonfat, with fruit ²	160	30
◆	Brown Cow Farm Fat Free, Cappuccino, Chocolate, Maple-Almond, Vanilla ¹	180	30
◆	Alta Dena Nonfat, fruit on the bottom ²	190	30
◆	Alta Dena Lowfat ²	200	30
◆	Brown Cow Farm Fat Free, with fruit ²	200	30
	Breyers Lowfat, with fruit ²	240	30
	Colombo Classic Fat Free, Cappuccino, French Roast, Lemon, Vanilla ¹	170	25
	Breyers Smooth & Creamy ²	230	25
	Breyers Light Fat Free* ²	120	20
	Colombo Classic Fat Free, fruit on the bottom ²	200	20
	Colombo Classic Fat Free, Banana Strawberry, Vanilla Caramel Sundae ¹	220	20
	Yogurt (6-oz. containers)	Calories	Calcium (%DV)
✓	Brown Cow Farm Organic Fat Free, plain	80	30
✓	Horizon Organic Nonfat, plain	80	30
◆	Horizon Organic Nonfat, Cappuccino, Vanilla ¹	120	25
◆	Horizon Organic Nonfat, with fruit ²	120	25
◆	Stonyfield Farm Organic Lowfat, Maple Vanilla, Mocha Latte, Vanilla ¹	120	25

	Yoplait Light Crunch 'n Yogurt* ²	140	25
◆	Dannon Double Delights, caramel or chocolate toppings ¹	210	25
	Dannon Light Duets* ²	90	20
	Yoplait Light Fat Free* ²	90	20
	Stonyfield Farm Organic Nonfat ²	120	20
	Dannon Fat Free Chunky Fruit ²	160	20
	Dannon Double Delights, fruit toppings ²	170	20
	Yoplait Original, French Vanilla	180	20
	Yoplait Original 99% Fat Free ²	180	20
	Yoplait Custard Style ²	190	20
	Yoplait Trix ²	190	20
	Yoplait Original, Coconut Cream Pie	200	20
	SnackWell's Nonfat# ²	170	15
	Yoplait Original, Café au Lait	170	15
	Yogurt (4.4-oz. containers, unless otherwise noted)	Calories	Calcium (%DV)
◆	Dannon Danimals ²	130	20
◆	Dannon Blended Nonfat ²	110	15
◆	Dannon Sprinkl'ins Magic Crystals (4 oz.) ²	110	15
◆	Dannon Sprinkl'ins Rainbow Sprinkles (4 oz.) ²	130	15
	Light n' Lively Free Nonfat* ²	70	10
	Breyers Blended ²	130	10
	Jell-O Kid Pack ²	130	10
	Light n' Lively ²	130	10

✓ Best Bite. ◆ Honorable Mention.

¹ Average of the flavors listed.

² Average of the entire line.

* Contains the artificial sweetener aspartame (NutraSweet).

Heat-treated (does not contain active bacterial cultures).

Daily Value (DV) for calcium: 1,000 mg.

