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## **Fight Battle of the Bulge with Dairy**

Obesity rates are higher than ever with an estimated 61 percent of U.S. adults overweight or obese and 13 percent of children and adolescents overweight, according to government statistics.

But the good news is studies show that milk, cheese and yogurt may play a critical role in weight maintenance and weight loss when coupled with a reduced calorie diet.

In a recent supplement to the Journal of Nutrition, several experts review recent studies – and present new information – identifying calcium and dairy products as potentially powerful players in the fight against the battle of the bulge.

The highlights are:

- **The "anti-obesity" effect of dietary calcium:** This paper (Zemel, M.B. Mechanisms of Dairy Modulation of Adiposity. Journal of Nutrition) reviewed various studies that found calcium and dairy products may help regulate body weight. In one study highlighted in the review, mice on a reduced calorie, high calcium diet lost more weight than mice on a reduced calorie, low calcium diet. The author says data from human studies suggest that consuming the recommended amount of calcium daily, specifically from dairy products, may play an important role in the prevention of adult and childhood obesity.
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- \* **Building better bodies, beyond bones:** A Creighton University researcher reevaluated data from previously published studies on women and bone health to determine if calcium intake plays a role in the risk of being overweight during mid-life. The analysis (Heaney, RP. Normalizing Calcium Intake: Projected Population Effects for Body Weight. Journal of Nutrition. 2003) found that women who consumed lower amounts of calcium gained an average of nearly a pound a year by mid-life. Conversely, women who consumed higher amounts of calcium – the amount of calcium found in about three servings of milk, cheese or yogurt – averaged a slight weight loss. While the researcher cautions against over-zealous interpretation of the results, he estimates the incidence of overweight and obesity may be reduced by as much as 60 to 80 percent if dietary calcium intakes were

shifted upward to the current recommendation of 1000 mg a day (for women ages 19-50).

- \* **Calcium enhances weight loss efforts:** Research in animals and humans over the past 10 years suggests that if Americans increase their consumption of dairy products and calcium, they may be on their way to reducing the growing epidemic of obesity and insulin resistance syndrome. The review (Teegarden, D. Calcium intake and reduction in weight regulation. *Journal of Nutrition*. 2003) looked at studies that included a wide age range of Caucasians and African Americans, both male and female, and found that increased calcium intake may help increase weight and/or fat loss. The author concludes, "calcium and dairy products should not be removed from weight loss diets, but instead may enhance the effects of the diet."