

New Look of School Milk Frequently Asked Questions

What is the New Look of School Milk?

The New Look of School Milk program features ice-cold milk in a variety of flavors, offered in easy-to-open, kid-appealing plastic packaging, attractively merchandised and served on the meal line, in a la carte and vending. The program helps transform a nutrient-rich choice like milk into an appealing one that students perceive as "cool to drink."

Why is a program like the New Look of School Milk important?

Currently, more than half of children ages 2-8 and three quarters of children ages 9-19 do not get the recommended daily servings of low-fat or fat-free milk or milk products.¹ And nearly nine out of 10 teenage girls and seven out of 10 teenage boys do not meet the recommended daily intake of calcium.² With children spending a significant portion of their time at school, and consuming at least one to two meals there, it is an ideal setting for creating and practicing healthy habits and encouraging increased milk consumption, which the New Look of School Milk accomplishes.

Encouraging milk drinking with school-aged children is particularly desirable because adequate calcium intake is especially important during years of peak bone formation.³ Milk provides more calcium and protein per 100 calories than any other food served on school lunch menus. And milk provides more calcium per penny than any other food served on school lunch menus.⁴ In addition, when children drink milk at lunch, they have higher intakes of several important nutrients, including calcium, zinc, and vitamin A.⁵

What role does milk play in healthy nutrition and school wellness?

Milk, white or flavored, contains a powerful nutrient package, complete with calcium and eight other essential nutrients. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), the U.S. Surgeon General and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend three daily low-fat or fat-free dairy food servings. According to the Dietary Guidelines, low-fat and fat-free milk or milk products, along with whole grains, fruits and vegetables, are among the Food Groups to Encourage. These foods are encouraged because they provide key nutrients that are low in the diets of Americans. Milk supplies three of the five nutrients the Dietary Guidelines identifies as low in children's diets: calcium, magnesium and potassium.

Dairy foods should be an integral part of implementing wellness policies and the New Look of School Milk program is a tool that makes a nutritious option like milk, appealing to children.

What research has been conducted to prove that the New Look of School Milk works?

The model that became the New Look of School Milk was assessed in the 2001-02 [School Milk Pilot Test](#). The results of the pilot were:

- Student milk consumption increased up to 37%.
- Milk sales increased 18%

- More students were attracted to the meal line, with lunch participation in secondary schools increasing 5%

Responses to a survey with moms on their children's nutrition and indicated that:

- Almost all the moms (97%) agree that nutrition impacts children's academic performance and overall success in school.
- Three in four moms (75%) are more likely to pay an extra 5-10 cents per container for their children's school to offer healthy beverage choices in appealing packaging.
- Recycling plastic milk containers or paper milk cartons by a child's school is important to 87% of moms (only a limited number of facilities are capable of handling coated milk cartons).

Results from a 2005 [School Milk Package Preference Test](#) conducted with school-aged children showed:

- 83% said the school milk in plastic bottles was "better overall" compared to the identical school milk packaged in a paper carton.
- Students were twice as likely to say they would choose milk served in a plastic bottle compared to milk in a paper carton.

How has the New Look of School Milk performed since the School Milk Pilot Test?

Since the pilot was completed, there are thousands of schools that are successfully offering the New Look of School Milk and experiencing sustained increases of 10% to 50% in milk sales and 10% to 50% in meal participation. These gains are maintained and provide proof that the New Look of School Milk can improve student nutrition long-term. Currently the "New Look" is in more than 10,000 schools, serving over 6 million students, serviced by 55 processors across the country.

What is the cost difference between plastic bottles and cartons?

The cost difference between plastic bottles and cartons varies from processor to processor, dependent on a number of variables, such as: is the processor set up to process milk in plastic bottles, is new equipment needed, are bottles blow molded on-site or do they need to be purchased?

Milk in plastic bottles costs more, however, districts nationwide have demonstrated the ability to balance and afford the increased cost. Many school nutrition professionals have found that the New Look of School Milk helps pay for itself through increased milk sales, meal participation and federal reimbursements.

Can the plastic milk bottles be recycled?

Yes, the plastic milk bottles can be recycled. In fact, plastic milk bottles are by far more readily recycled than paperboard milk cartons because very few recycling facilities are capable of

handling cartons as they are polycoated. It is estimated that a very small percent of milk cartons are being recycled due to limited markets and low value.

Most processors are using natural (non-pigmented) high density polyethylene resin (HDPE) for the manufacturing of 8 oz. plastic milk bottles. Natural HDPE is the most recycled plastic resin nationally, consistently has the highest market value of any post-consumer plastic and is used to make a variety of recycled content items, which include high-value and long-lasting products such as children's playground equipment and composite decking. Domestic demand for post-consumer natural HDPE significantly exceeds current supply. Export markets add to the demand for natural HDPE bales.

Recycling a ton of plastic bottles saves about 3.8 barrels of oil. It reduces green house gas emissions by substituting recycled resin for new resin and saves landfill space. Plastic milk bottles can be the one item that makes enough "critical mass" so it is worthwhile for a recycling company to work with a district for no or very low cost. And establishing a recycling program teaches students to respect and take care of the environment. Learn more about the [benefits of recycling](#) and find out about the [Drink It Then Sink It](#) recycling bins that have been designed for the New Look of School Milk.

How does flavored milk fit into school nutrition programs?

Compared to their peers, children who drink [flavored milk](#) drink more milk overall and are more likely to meet their calcium needs without consuming more total fat and calories, according to a study in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association.¹⁰ Flavored milk, one element of the New Look of School Milk program, is nutrient-rich, providing the same nine essential nutrients as white milk, including calcium, potassium, phosphorous, protein, vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin B12, riboflavin and niacin (niacin equivalents).

Children who consume flavored milk do not have higher intakes of added sugars or total fat than children who do not consume flavored milk, but flavored milk drinkers do have higher intakes of calcium.¹⁰

According to the Dietary Guidelines, small amounts of sugars added to nutrient-dense foods such as reduced-fat milk products, may increase a person's intake of such food by enhancing palatability of these products, thus improving nutrient intake without contributing excessive calories.¹¹

How can I get help to implement the New Look of School Milk in my schools?

Talk to your area dairy processors and let them know that you are interested in the program. Ask them what products they currently have available and any innovation plans they have for the future. Even if they do not carry milk in plastic bottles, continue the dialog to let them know that you are committed to starting an enhanced milk program.

Include milk in a variety of flavors and in 8 oz. plastic bottles on your bid. For assistance in bidding, download the [Bidding Milk in Plastic Bottles FAQ's](#), procurement tips and sample bid language.

Get assistance from your local Dairy Council who can help districts assess their current milk program and the financial implications.

Talk to your peers who have successfully implemented the program. Read some of their [success stories](#) and get [contact information](#) on some of the school nutrition professionals who have offered to tell others about the New Look of School Milk.

Network with other school districts in your area and form a cooperative buying unit to create the volume needed by processors to make providing milk in plastic bottles feasible.

References

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