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**Question:** What's the difference between cow's milk yogurt and plant-based alternatives?

**Answer:** The dairy case is brimming with so many varieties, flavors and types of yogurt, it can be hard to decide which ones to choose. Newer plant-based yogurt-like products are hitting store shelves, including ones made from almonds, coconuts, cashews, soy and hemp, adding to the confusion.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Though cow's milk yogurt and plant-based alternatives sit side-by-side in the dairy case, nutritionally they may not be the same. That's because plant-based alternatives do not have a standard of identity like cow's milk yogurt does.
- Cow's milk yogurt is naturally rich in certain nutrients, while plant-based alternatives are often fortified with these nutrients. For example, cow's milk yogurt contains about 8 grams of protein per serving. Many plant-based alternatives contain 1 gram of protein per serving. Therefore, you will need to read food labels carefully, remembering that nutrient content may vary between brands.
- The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend three servings of dairy foods per day as part of a healthy eating pattern, and plant-based yogurt alternatives made from many plant-based sources do not count towards a serving of dairy.
- Cow's milk yogurt with the voluntary "live and active cultures" seal indicates the presence of probiotic cultures (*Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*). While cultures may also be used in plant-based alternatives, these vary by brand and may or may not be considered a probiotic.
- People with an allergy to cow's milk protein, vegans or others who choose not to eat dairy foods might choose plant-based alternatives fortified with at least as much calcium as a similar size of cow's milk yogurt to support bone health. For example, 6 ounces of fat-free plain cow's milk yogurt contains about 338 mg of calcium.
- Healthy eating styles, which include low-fat and fat-free dairy foods, are linked to reduced risk of certain chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes in adults. Dairy consumption is also linked to improved bone health, especially in children and adolescents. Eating cow's milk yogurt has been recognized by nutrition experts as a characteristic of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

Overall, it's important to keep in mind that no single food will make or break a diet. It is your overall eating pattern that matters for good health and well-being.

**Source:** <https://dairygood.org/content/2017/whats-the-difference-between-cows-milk-yogurt-and-plant-based-alternatives>

