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We are a family of four. Five if you include Teddy, our toy poodle who thinks he's a human. We live in Bucks County, PA. My husband is a recruiter in the PA Army National Guard, and as such, doesn't have a typical 9-5 job. I am a stay at home mom. We have 2 daughters, Ashley (9 going on 19) and Lauren (8). We began homeschooling this year and they gave their input to the following as an assignment. One that they did happily believe it or not! One of the benefits of homeschooling is that I can offer my girls more nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. In health class, we cover nutrition and healthy lifestyles and their importance. They have learned that a well-balanced meal should contain a protein, a grain, a fruit or vegetable, and milk and dairy products. Our meals always do, and my girls will tell me if I forget something! My top goals for my family's health are nutrition, exercise, and sleep. When I think about dairy as a top source of nutrition, I automatically think of milk.

Milk is one of the most universal sources of nutrition. Aside from being served as a beverage, or added to a bowl of cereal, it can be found in a lot of snack foods such as goldfish crackers and cookies, as well as my oldest daughter's beloved ranch dressing. As a wife and mother of 2 school aged kiddos, I like to think that I provide my family with well-balanced, nutritional meals. Most of the meals I make are freshly prepared using organically sourced ingredients. The milk-based staples in our house consist of milk, half and half, yogurt, butter, cheese, cream cheese, sour cream, and ice cream. That seems like a lot, but here is how it's broken down. Breakfasts usually consist of either fruit and yogurt, toast with butter, cereal with milk, or a bagel with cream cheese. Coffee is served with half and half (usually all day since I literally run on Dunkin!). Lunches usually involve a sandwich or quesadillas consisting of some type of cheese. Dinners can incorporate any type of milk product. Sour cream and cheese on taco night, to cream in various sauces, to the kids' beloved buttered noodles! I always add sour cream or plain yogurt when baking as well. Ice cream is usually a favorite desert in our house. I also have cut up fruits, veggies, and cheese sticks or slices on hand for snacks.

The benefits of well-balanced nutrition for my family are evident at each dental and medical checkup, as my girls have never had a cavity and their BMI's are right on target. This is super important to me as a parent because the habits that they adopt now set the stage for their habits as adults. That's not to say that they don't reach for the goldfish and the cookies, but I've found that if I have other healthier options on hand like the yogurt and cheese sticks, they will go for those first.

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