

Source: American Dairy Association, Northeast

## Yogurt: A Tasty Addition to Your Stress Management Toolkit

You've heard that yoga is great for stress management, right? Well, what about yogurt? Yes, that's right, yogurt. A recent European study done in mice showed that the probiotics (good bacteria) in yogurt that are useful in aiding digestion, also helped alter the brain chemistry and lower certain stress hormones. While assumptions about stress reduction for humans can't be made based on animal studies (scientists haven't quite made that connection just yet), it can be said that the actual positive probiotic effect of yogurt digestion in humans may make life a little less stressful for some people.

We also know that yogurt contains many essential nutrients such as calcium, protein and potassium—important for maintaining strong bones and healthy bodies. Being in good health can relieve stress as well. So, whether for bone health or maintaining a strong, healthy body, why not add yogurt to your daily routine? Who knows, it might just reduce your stress, too!

Walk down the dairy aisle of any grocery store today and you're bound to see the yogurt section exploding with new varieties and flavors! That's great news because as a consumer, you want choices and you want to feel good about what you eat. Yogurt fits that bill—it's a nutrient-packed dairy food, offering many health benefits!

Yogurt is a "cultured" dairy product, meaning that a mixture of milk and cream has been fermented by a culture of "good" bacteria (probiotics), to break down the natural lactose (or milk sugar), creating a creamy texture. Flavorings and sweeteners can be added, and the fermentation time and temperature can vary, allowing for a wide variety of yogurt options for consumers—including those managing lactose intolerance. The probiotic benefits of yogurt have been associated with supporting both healthy digestion and immune function. Be sure to look for the words "live and active cultures" on product labels.

A hallmark health benefit of yogurt and other dairy products would have to be bone health. Yogurt offers protein and bone-building nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus; however, check labels for vitamin D, also necessary for bone health, because even though all milks are fortified with it, not all yogurts are.

That said, it's worth noting that dairy foods, including yogurt, are good for more than just strong bones. Federal dietary guidelines recommend three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy every day to help lower the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes.\*

So feel confident – and cultured – when looking at all the delicious yogurt options available, knowing they're not only good-tasting, but good for you, too!

*\*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015 - 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. December 2015 Available at <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>.*

For recipes using yogurt: <https://www.americandairy.com/dairy-health/benefits-of-dairy/yogurt.stml>