**July 2013**

**Be smart when choosing yogurt**

Contact Nancy Schultz, nancy.schultz@co.shawano.wi.us

Everyone knows yogurt is nutritious, especially if it’s made from low-fat or fat-free milk and fortified with vitamin D. Like the milk it’s made from, yogurt contains calcium, potassium and many other vitamins and minerals. And yogurt with live, active cultures has the added benefit of probiotic microorganisms that help promote digestive health.

But smart consumers know some brands of yogurt have more nutritional benefits than others, says Susan Nitzke, Professor Emerita and UW-Extension specialist in nutritional sciences at UW-Madison. She points out that many yogurt choices are high in added sugar, including several types of yogurt that are marketed as “kid-friendly.”

Examples of yogurt varieties that are likely to have added sugar include flavored yogurts, squeezable yogurt tubes, yogurt parfaits, frozen yogurt, and yogurt with sprinkles or other toppings.

Nitzke points out that figuring out how much sugar is added to yogurt can be confusing because there is some naturally occurring sugar (lactose) in plain yogurt. Although lactose from milk is slightly reduced in the process of making yogurt, Nitzke says that an 8-oz. cup of plain or artificially sweetened yogurt usually has roughly 15 grams of sugar in the form of lactose. “If sugar, corn syrup, honey, or evaporated cane juice are listed among the first three ingredients, the product is relatively high in added sugars,” says Nitzke.

What about Greek yogurt? Nitzke says most Greek yogurt products are strained to remove much of the liquid whey. “In addition to being thicker than traditional yogurt, the extra straining process tends to concentrate yogurt’s protein and reduce the content of calcium and lactose, or sugar,” says Nitzke. Its reduced lactose content makes Greek yogurt a popular choice among people with lactose intolerance.

For more information on yogurt and healthy eating, contact Shawano County UW-Extension office or check out the following fact sheet from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: <http://www.eatright.org/Public/content.aspx?id=6442471030>.