

# Organic Milk Health Benefits

## Fact Sheet

Organic milk has all the goodness of non-organic milk and due to the cows' more natural diet has also been found to provide additional health benefits such as:

- it is produced without the use of almost all chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilisers.
- there is increasing evidence that it contains more important nutrients.

**The Food Standards Agency acknowledge that organic milk is 'nutritionally different' to non-organic milk, the crucial question is...in what way? The summary below highlights findings from recent peer reviewed studies and demonstrates why and how switching to organic milk makes nutritional sense.**

### Vitamin A, E and Antioxidants:

*What?*

Organically reared cows produce milk which is on average higher in:

- Vitamin E, 50%.
- Beta carotene (which our bodies convert in to Vitamin A), 75%.
- Antioxidants lutein, conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) & zeaxanthine, 50%+.

*Why?*

- Organic cows eat higher levels of fresh grass, clover pasture and grass-clover silage and hay.

*Who?*

- The Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences, in conjunction with the European funded Quality Low Input Food project at Newcastle University (27 May 2008).

### Benefits Vitamin A:

- helps maintain the health of skin and mucus linings (in the nose for example).
- helps strengthen immunity to infections.
- helps vision in dim light.

### Benefits Vitamin E (& antioxidants):

- plays a vital role in maintaining cell structure.
- is known to have strong antioxidant properties (antioxidants neutralise the effects of free radicals which attack certain cells in the body such as the lung, heart, skin and red blood cells and as a result have been linked to the development of coronary heart disease and certain cancers in humans.)

### Eczema and allergy:

*What?*

- Incidence of eczema in young children was reduced by 36% when they consumed organic dairy products.
- Breast feeding mothers consuming organic dairy products have higher levels of essential fatty acids in their breast milk and this helps protect the baby from allergic reactions.

*Why?*

- Organic milk contains more essential fatty acids, these may provide protection from allergic reactions because of their anti-inflammatory properties.
- The higher content of essential fatty acids in organic dairy products positively affects the amount in the breast milk, and this appears to provide a protective effect on the infant.



- Breastfeeding mothers and infants consuming organic milk and dairy products get protection from the extra essential fatty acids they ingest, from their mother's breast milk and, when they are infants, from organic dairy products.

#### *Who?*

- The British Journal of Nutrition reported the results of a recent research in the Netherlands. Scientists studied the effect of consuming organic dairy products and food on Dutch women in the final weeks of pregnancy and on their infants through to when the children were two years old.

### **Omega 3:**

#### *What?*

- Organic milk is on average 68% higher in Omega 3, Alpha Linolenic Acid (ALA) than non-organic milk.

#### *Why?*

- Cows on an organic dairy farm consume higher levels of grass and red clover (from grazed meadows, silage and hay) and less concentrate (cereal) feed than non-organic cows.

#### *Who?*

- Research funded by OMSCo and conducted independently by Dr Kathryn Ellis at the Universities of Liverpool & Glasgow research project from 2002-2005 studied the compositional differences between organic and non-organic milk. The results were published in the Journal of Dairy Science in 2006.

### **Benefits Omega 3 (ALA):**

- ALA is different from the poly-unsaturated Omega-3 fatty acids found in oily fish and it is converted in the human body from ALA to the same types of fatty acid found in oily fish. This conversion is particularly prevalent in pregnant women.
- Poly-unsaturated Omega-3 benefits heart health, functioning of the immune system and is an important component of our brain and nervous system.
- Some studies show that ALA can help protect against heart disease, contribute to healthy bones and have a positive effect on the functioning of the immune system.
- Increasing the consumption of ALA could be particularly important in women during pregnancy when the foetus has a high demand for essential fatty acids for brain development. Higher intake of ALA could also be important for infants who also have a huge demand for these types of fatty acids for brain development.



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