Kids' diets win when flavored dairy products replace sodas and fruit drinks

-- Study finds flavored milks and yogurts are building blocks for better nutrition --

Boise, ID., January, 2004 – An analysis of the diets of more than 3,000 children published in the January 2004 issue of the *Journal of Adolescent Health* shows a positive effect on children's diets when kids choose flavored milks and yogurts instead of sodas and sweetened drinks.

The study showed that children ages 6-17 who consumed more than 6-8 ounces of flavored dairy products, such as milks, yogurts, ice creams and puddings, each day had a better diet than those who regularly drank sodas and sweetened fruit drinks. Those consuming more flavored dairy got more than two servings of dairy foods and took in more calcium, folate and iron, fewer added sugars and less saturated fat overall than children who drank more than 16-25 ounces of sodas and sweetened fruit drinks every day. The analysis also showed that only children ages 6-11 who did not consume sodas and sweetened drinks got the recommended amount of calcium each day.

"When sodas and fruit drinks replace dairy foods in the diet, it's hard for children to get the key nutrients they need for growth and development," says Dr. Rachel Johnson, professor of nutrition at the University of Vermont, and one of the study's authors. "Our analysis shows that flavored dairy products like milks and yogurts are a great addition to a child's diet because they are packed with important nutrients and have fewer added sugars than the soft drinks they are replacing."

This study coincides with the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) newest policy statement which recommends that health professionals work to restrict the sale of sweetened drinks in schools in order to help prevent some of the health problems associated with too many sodas and sweetened beverages. The AAP recommends replacing sweetened drinks with real fruit and vegetable juices, water and lowfat white or flavored milk. The policy also notes that as sweetened drink consumption rises, milk consumption declines and milk is the primary source of calcium in the diets of children and adolescents.

Calcium is especially important for adolescents. Because almost 45 percent of skeletal mass is formed between the ages of nine and 18, health professionals recommend at least 1,300 mg of calcium every day for this age group; the equivalent of four servings of milk, cheese or yogurt.

Sources:

Frary CD, RK Johnson and MQ Wang. Children and Adolescents' Choices of Foods and Beverages High in Added Sugars are Associated with Intakes of Key Nutrients and Food Groups. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2004; 34:56-63.

American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement. Soft Drinks in Schools. *Pediatrics*. 2004; 113(1):152-154.