It's Greek (yogurt) to me! [1]

Alice,

Last week I purchased Greek yogurt from the grocery store. I have heard that Greek yogurt is healthier than regular yogurt, but don't have anything to base that off of. Is this true?

Thanks,

It's Greek to me

Answer

Dear It's Greek to me,

Greek, or strained, yogurt seems to be making all the top healthy food lists and taking up ever more space on the grocery store shelves lately. It's great that you're skeptical of what could feel like a healthy food fad. While yogurt is generally considered to be a healthy food and can be part of a healthful diet, Greek yogurt does have an edge over the regular stuff.

Greek yogurt differs from normal yogurt in that liquid whey is strained out of the yogurt to give it a tangier taste and richer, creamier texture. But how different is Greek yogurt from regular yogurt? Not so different, it turns out. In fact, Greek yogurt can actually be made from regular yogurt; all that is involved is placing regular yogurt on a cheese cloth and letting some of the liquid whey drain out into a container below it. Greek yogurt has a similar nutritional profile as regular yogurt in terms of being a good source of protein, calcium, phosphorus, riboflavin (vitamin B2), thiamin (vitamin B1), and vitamin B12, as well as of folate, niacin, magnesium and zinc. Any type of yogurt that contains probiotics [2] (live bacterial cultures) is associated with a number of possible health benefits, such as aiding digestion, having antidiarrheal properties, combatting carcinogens, regulating gut environment, alleviating irritable bowel syndrome, and boosting immune response.

So from where does Greek yogurt's slight edge over regular yogurt originate? Greek yogurt has a higher protein and lower complex carbohydrate content than normal yogurt, as the process of making Greek yogurt allows some of the sugars in the yogurt to be strained out in the whey-containing liquid. However, check the label on what you bought; some varieties have added sweeteners, resulting in higher sugar levels. Also, keep the fat content in mind. Though many non-fat varieties of Greek yogurt are now available, fuller fat varieties can pack in the saturated fat [3].

If you like the taste and texture, then consider buying it again next week. The consumption of
high protein snacks (Greek yogurt is considered to be an excellent choice) has been linked to reduced appetite, increased feelings of fullness and less frequent and heavy meals, compared to not snacking and to consuming regular varieties of yogurt. There are many uses for Greek yogurt besides as a snack. You could try Greek yogurt as a low-fat replacement for sour cream, in cooking, or as a salad dressing. Try swapping it for mayonnaise on a sandwich or in a dish like egg salad. Mixed with seasonings like garlic or dill, it can be made into a unique dip for veggies. Throw some fruit and granola on it for breakfast.

Hope you understand Greek (yogurt) a bit better now!

Alice!

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