

Often as dietitians we get asked about whether low fat milk is a better option for both children and adults to consume. The next question that often follows is “but doesn't low fat milk have a ton of extra sugar added to it?” This is a common misconception that is often shared from one person to the next in the belief that it is true. However if we take a look at the labels of these products they tell a different story.

Average All Brands Milk, fresh

Cow, Whole, full-fat (3.6% fat)

1 cup (250mL)

Calories 178 (738kJ)

		% Daily Value
Total Fat	8.8g	13%
Sat. Fat	6.2g	31%
Cholesterol	25mg	8%
Sodium	112mg	5%
Total Carbs.	15.8g	5%
Dietary Fiber	0g	0%
Sugars	15.8g	
Protein	8.8g	
Calcium	270mg	
Potassium	362.5mg	

Full Cream Milk Label*

Average All Brands Milk, fresh

Cow, low-fat (1% fat)

1 cup (250mL)

Calories 128 (538kJ)

		% Daily Value
Total Fat	2.5g	4%
Sat. Fat	2g	10%
Cholesterol	12mg	4%
Sodium	100mg	4%
Total Carbs.	15g	5%
Dietary Fiber	0g	0%
Sugars	15g	
Protein	10g	
Calcium	275mg	
Potassium	387.5mg	

Low Fat Milk Label*

As you can clearly see the sugar content of the low fat milk and the full cream milk are basically identical. Where people often get confused is that the percentage of sugar in the milks is different due to the difference in fat content. When looking at percentages we do see the following difference:

- Full Cream Milk – **34%** of energy comes from sugars
- Low Fat Milk – **46%** of energy comes from sugars

This difference however is not because there are more grams of sugar in the product – you can see the actual amount of sugar (grams) is about the same. The difference in the percentage occurs because there are fewer kilojoules in the low fat milk, because there is less fat. We see the proportion of sugars relative to the total kilojoules in the milk becomes higher but the actual amount of sugar is the same.

Conclusion: Low fat milk has the same sugar content as full cream milk; it is only sugar as a **percentage** of the total kilojoule content that changes.