

Girl's scary condition was no laughing matter

BY TANYA LEWIS

They say laughter is the best medicine. But what if laughter is the disease?

For a 6-year-old girl in Bolivia who suffered from uncontrollable and inappropriate bouts of giggles, laughter was a symptom of a serious brain problem. But doctors initially diagnosed the child with "misbehavior."

"She was considered spoiled, crazy — even devil-possessed," José Lidors Burgos Zuleta of the Advanced Medical Image Centre in La Paz said in a statement.

But Burgos Zuleta discovered that the true cause of the girl's laughing seizures, medically called gelastic seizures, was a brain tumor.

After the girl underwent a brain scan, the doctors discovered a hamartoma, a small, benign tumor that was pressing against her brain's temporal lobe. Surgeons removed the tumor,

"She was considered spoiled, crazy — even devil-possessed."

José Lidors Burgos Zuleta, the doctor who discovered the cause of a girl's uncontrollable laughing

the doctors said. She stopped having the uncontrollable attacks of laughter and now laughs only normally, they said.

Gelastical seizures are a relatively rare form of epilepsy, said Solomon Moshé, a pediatric neurologist at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York.

"It's not necessarily 'ha-ha-ha' laughing," Moshé said. "There's no happiness in this. Some of the kids may be very scared," he added.

The seizures are most often caused by tumors in the hypothalamus, although they can also come from tumors in other parts of brain, Moshé said. Although laughter is the main symptom, patients may also have outbursts of crying.

These tumors can cause growth abnormalities if they affect the pituitary gland, he said.

The surgery to remove such tumors used to be difficult and dangerous, but a new technique developed within the past 10 years allows doctors to remove them effectively without great risk, Moshé said.

The doctors who treated the girl said their report of her case could raise awareness of the strange condition, allowing doctors to diagnose the true cause of some children's "behavioral" problems and refer them to a neurologist.

— Live Science

Cows no longer have a monopoly on milk

Soy, almonds, rice and other alternatives expand dairy market

BY JENNIFER VAN ALLEN

Just a few years ago, the term "milk" was synonymous with the stuff that came from cows.

But now the dairy market is awash in plant-based alternatives made from soy, rice, almonds, coconut and hemp, driven largely by consumers' thirst for low-calorie, low-sugar, lactose-free companions for their morning cereal and coffee.

Milk alternatives make up just 8 percent of overall milk sales in the United States, but for the past few years, they've represented the fastest-growing part of the dairy market, according to Mintel, a Chicago-based research firm. Sales of milk alternatives rose to nearly \$2 billion in 2013, up 30 percent since 2011, driven in large part by the popularity of almond milk. In that same period, the entire milk category grew by just 1.8 percent, to \$24.5 billion, according to Mintel. Nondairy milk's growth is expected to continue outpacing dairy milk's at least through 2018.

Plant-based alternatives can be a saving grace for people with food allergies or lactose intolerance, or those who follow vegan diets. (An estimated 12 percent of Americans suffer from lactose intolerance, according to the National Institutes of Health.)

Probably the more powerful factor driving the popularity of milk substitutes is a consumer group that Sandy Krueger of IRI Worldwide, a Chicago-based market research firm, calls the "healthy chic": people who look at labels and are drawn to products that promise to improve health and wellness.

"There's a sort of health halo" to plant-based milks, Krueger says. "There's a general perception that they're healthier than cow's milk, and taste better."

With the proliferation of new flavors and varieties — 52 new milk-substitute products have been rolled out so far in 2014 — the growth is sure to continue, she says.

The nutrition profile of each milk substitute varies widely, so different products appeal to people with different health priorities, says Jessica Crandall, a registered dietitian and spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

People counting calories might reach for almond milk, which has less than half the calories of skim milk, and no sugar. Those who want to boost protein intake may choose soy milk, which has eight grams of protein per serving, as much as cow's milk. Some drink kefir — a fermented, fortified dairy drink — because it contains probiotics, which help digestion and defend against gastrointestinal distress. Hemp milk, made from the hemp seed, can be a



PLENTY OF CHOICES

Confused about which milk to drink? Read labels carefully, advises registered dietitian Jessica Crandall. Below, find nutritional information for milk and some popular substitutes. (All values are for an eight-ounce serving.)

	CALORIES	FAT (GRAMS)	PROTEIN (GRAMS)	SUGAR (GRAMS)	CALCIUM (% OF RDA)	VITAMIN D (% OF RDA)	OTHER BENEFITS
WHOLE*	149	8	8	12	27.6%	20.6%	Folate, niacin, riboflavin, thiamin and vitamins B6, A and E
2%*	122	5	8	12	29.3%	20%	Iron, magnesium, potassium, zinc, vitamin B6
SKIM*	83	0	8	12	29.9%	19.2%	Iron, magnesium, potassium, zinc, vitamin B6
SOY (Silk Original Soy Milk)	110	4.5	8	6	45%	30%	Vitamin B12, magnesium, phosphorus
ALMOND (Almond Breeze Original Unsweetened)	30	2.5	1	0	45%	25%	Vitamin E, magnesium
RICE (Rice Dream Enriched Unsweetened Original)	120	2.5	1	10	30%	25%	Vitamins B12 and A, phosphorus
COCONUT (So Delicious Dairy Free)	70	4.5	0	7	10%	30%	Magnesium, Vitamins B12 and A, medium-chain fatty acids
HEMP MILK (All Natural Hemp Milk, Pacific Foods)	70	3	5	0	30%	30%	Vitamin A, B12 and E, phosphorus, magnesium, riboflavin
KEFIR (Nancy's Organic Lowfat Plain Kefir)	140	3	11	16	40%	0	Probiotics

*Source: USDA Nutrient Database



PHOTOS BY BIGSTOCK

good option for kids with food allergies who need a source of calcium or protein, Crandall says. It also has essential fatty acids such as omega-3 and omega-6, which help build healthy cells and reduce risk of heart disease.

But just because a milk is plant-based doesn't mean it's healthful.

While many plant-based milks are fortified, some don't contain as much calcium or vitamin D as cow's milk, which is important in preventing osteoporosis. Crandall says you can supplement with such foods as kale, chia seeds, edamame and sardines, which are packed with calcium and vitamin D.

Stick with pasteurized, unsweetened varieties of milk alternatives, Crandall says. One cup of Almond Breeze chocolate milk, for instance, has 20 grams of sugar, as much as there is in a Cadbury Creme Egg.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest cautions consumers to read labels closely and beware of milk substitutes that ride the health benefits of the plant they're derived from even if the milk isn't as nutritious as the whole food. For instance, while an ounce of almonds has about six grams of protein, almond milk

Who need cow's milk when substitutes are being made with soybeans, almonds, rice and other foods?

has only one gram per one-cup serving.

In the kitchen, each milk substitute is suited for different uses. Hemp milk, for instance, is a good choice for cappuccinos and lattes because it froths better than other plant-based varieties, says Megan Roosevelt a registered dietitian in Portland, Ore., who runs Healthy Grocery Girl, a Web site that offers advice on food shopping and healthy living. Because of its thick, creamy consistency, soy milk is ideal in smoothies and for cooking and baking. Almond milk, milder in flavor and thinner in texture, tastes good in coffee, tea, smoothies or on its own. Rice milk has the thinnest consistency of all nondairy milks and can be a good accompaniment for cereal or smoothies.

The proliferation of milk substitutes hasn't gone unnoticed by the marketers of cow's milk. A variety of dairy-milk products with added protein and probiotics have recently hit store shelves. In February, the dairy-milk processors rolled out a \$50 million ad campaign that promotes milk's high protein content.

Calcium has been milk's traditional nutritional advantage over other beverages. But by focusing on protein and all of its implicit benefits — protein increases satiety, assists in weight management and builds muscle mass — dairy-milk producers have seized on a way to stay culturally relevant for parents, aging boomers and seniors.

The so-called Milk Life campaign replaces the "Got Milk?" campaign, which began in 1995. New commercials feature kids, teens and adults drinking milk to power everything from break dancing to dog walking. "This is what eight grams of protein can do," the ads proclaim.

In consumer research, the message about milk's high-protein content was the one most likely to win over consumers now drinking juice, water or soda, says Victor Zaborsky, marketing director for the Milk Processor Education Association, which represents 200 dairy-milk companies. "It really emphasized the benefits that dairy milk had over alternative beverages," he says.

"Traditionally, milk has been an unconscious choice, just something you put in your coffee or cereal," Zaborsky says. "Now we're trying to shift it so that dairy milk is a conscious choice consumers routinely make to improve their quality of life for the long term."

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