

Transcript from “620 WTMJ's Wisconsin's Morning News with Gene Mueller.”

Host: Is life without cheese worth living? Aaron Rodgers is about to find out. He's cut dairy out of his diet. That includes the states number one product. Joining us is registered dietician Amy Kulwicki from Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin. Good morning, Amy.

Amy: Good morning, guys!

Host: So it is possible to live without dairy isn't it?

Amy: It is. In Wisconsin, that's something I think is really hard for us to say and comprehend. But it certainly is a possibility.

Host: How fatty is cheese?

Amy: Cheese is high in saturated fat and so as dieticians we tell you to watch how much cheese you eat. Again, we love our cheese, we eat it all the time, so it's quality and quantity that I have people look for.

Host: Aaron [Rodgers] is saying in one article I saw that this has more to do than with watching his weight. He says that certain combinations of foods, he's been told, can lead to inflammation in other places in the body. He's talking, in his case, about knee problems he's had in the past, and he wants to reduce inflammation. I'd never heard of this before.

Amy: I'd heard of it before. I've seen some other people try this. I know in the media, I had read some information about Tom Brady following a similar diet. I think the biggest thing is that Aaron has cut out dairy in his diet, and he's also limiting the intake of animal proteins in general. They're saying that he's occasionally eating chicken and red meat, so just to clarify, that's not exactly a vegan diet. Vegan means that you eliminate all dairy or all animal sources. Basically he's eating a healthy, plant-based diet to help him reduce inflammation.

Host: As much as you can tell, do you think this is a trend among elite athletes, or is this something that's been around for a long time?

Amy: The science and studies that are out there that are looking at diet and its effect on inflammation are pushing to have a good, balanced diet that enhances the body's immune system. It's actually going to provide antioxidants to help reduce inflammatory stress. After this broke with Aaron Rodgers, I did do some research and there are articles out there. But like all research, there needs to be more studies because everything I read were small studies that basically concluded that more research needs to be done to see what the effects are on diet modifications and that inflammatory response.

Host: We've talked before about whether it's wise to say you're absolutely banning something from your diet because it can tend to make you want to crave it. That's why, in essence, you don't recommend going on “diets,” per se; because if you say you're not going to eat something, it just makes you want it more.

Amy: Absolutely. I think the interesting thing for Aaron Rodgers, from what I'm understanding, is using the diet for the goal of reducing inflammation. Aaron Rodgers is working with a credentialed dietician to help him modify his diet. So although he's pulled out dairy and a lot of the animal sources of protein, he did work with a dietician to help make sure that all of his needs are being met from a nutritional standpoint. He's still going to get that protein, vitamin D and those calcium sources that are oftentimes reduced when you take dairy out of the diet.

Host: But as everyone knows, there are some cheeses that are better than others. Cottage cheese is marketed as something that's healthy for you, right?

Amy: Sure, and again, cheeses are going to be high in protein. They do have calcium in them. Again, it's the serving size. So when you look at what an ounce serving is, that's a quarter of a cup or a slice of cheese. A lot of us eat half a block of cheese when we cut. So it's just a matter of if you do choose dairy in your diet, it's a matter of what is that portion size. Choosing quality cheese and watching the quantity is going to help you keep that fat content down.