Lactose or Dairy Intolerance

A Guide for People Who Have Trouble Digesting Milk or Milk Products

Milk helps build strong bones and teeth. But what can you do if you are having trouble digesting milk?

What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose is the natural sugar in milk. Some people cannot digest lactose well.

When lactose does not get digested you may have:

- **Gas**
- **Bloating**
- **Cramps**
- **Diarrhea**

This happens 30 minutes to two hours after eating or drinking foods that have lactose.

If you have these problems, your doctor can do a simple test to see if you are lactose intolerant.

Lactose in Dairy Foods:

High Lactose

Milk

Medium Lactose

Ice Cream

Medium-Low Lactose

Yogurt

Low Lactose

Cottage Cheese

Very Low Lactose

Hard Cheese

Is lactose intolerance the same as milk allergy?

Lactose intolerance is not the same as milk allergy. People with milk allergy are allergic to the protein in milk. Milk allergy is very rare. Only 1–3% of babies have it. Most children with a milk allergy outgrow it before the age of 3. The possible symptoms include: skin rash, diarrhea and/or constipation, bronchitis, and blood in the stool. Diagnosis must be made by a doctor.

What can I do if I am lactose intolerant?

- Eat or drink small amounts of dairy products more often.
- Eat or drink dairy products along with other foods at a meal or snack.
- Use foods that contain less lactose, such as lactose-reduced milk, hard cheeses, cottage cheese, yogurt with "**Active Cultures,**" and ice cream.
- Buy foods labeled "low lactose" or "lactose free."
- Look for "**Lactose-reduced milks**" in the dairy section in the supermarket. They taste good and are easier to digest if you have lactose intolerance. Ask your WIC counselor about these types of milk if you would like to buy them with your WIC benefits.
- Ask your pharmacist or doctor for special drops or tablets (lactase enzymes) that help you digest milk. You can add drops to regular whole milk, 2% milk, 1% milk or nonfat milk to make your own lactose-reduced milk.

Why do I still need dairy products?

Dairy products are a major source of calcium, though calcium can be found in other foods. Your body needs calcium for healthy bones and teeth.

In later life, a lack of calcium may lead to thin and weak bones. This condition is known as **osteoporosis.**

Everyone needs to get plenty of food high in calcium to build strong bones.

Non-dairy sources of calcium

Here are some non-dairy foods that contain calcium. These foods do not contain as much calcium as dairy products.

Good Sources of Calcium:

- **soybeans**
- **tofu***
- **collard greens**
- **salmon and sardines with bones**
- **refried beans**
- **baked beans**
- **calcium-fortified juice**
- **soy beverages**

*if calcium is listed with the ingredients

Fair Sources of Calcium:

- **clams**
- **oysters**
- **mung beans**
- **mustard greens**
- **turnip greens**
- **almonds**
- **oranges**
- **corn tortillas****

**if lime is listed with the ingredients

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