

Lactose Intolerant Diet

What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance means you aren't able to fully digest the milk sugar (lactose) in dairy products. The enzyme lactase, present in the small intestine, splits lactose into two simple sugars. These simple sugars can be absorbed by the body and used as nourishment. When lactase is absent, lactose passes through the small intestine to the colon carrying extra fluid with it. In the colon, bacteria break down lactose into lactic acid and certain gases. Lactic acid is an irritant and laxative. It can cause symptoms such as bloating, diarrhea, abdominal cramps and gas. It is not usually dangerous, but symptoms of lactose intolerance can be uncomfortable enough to steer you clear of the dairy aisle.

Is lactose intolerance the same as a milk allergy?

No. Lactose intolerance should not be confused with a milk allergy. A milk allergy is an allergic reaction to the protein components in milk. Individuals with milk allergy usually must avoid all milk products. Those with lactose intolerance can use certain dairy products or those low in lactose.

Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of lactose intolerance usually begin 30 minutes to 2 hours after eating or drinking foods that contain lactose. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Diarrhea, which is the most common symptom.
- Nausea
- Abdominal cramps
- Bloating
- Gas

Symptoms are usually mild but may sometimes be severe.

Risk factors

A few risk factors can make you more prone to lactose intolerance:

- **Age.** Lactose intolerance usually starts after age 5- the condition is uncommon in infants and young children. Most full term infants produce lactase enzyme from birth, but the amount tends to decrease by adulthood.
- **Ethnicity.** Lactose intolerance is more common in certain ethnic and racial populations. Lactose intolerance is more common in black, Asian, Hispanic and American Indian populations.
- **Premature birth.** Infants born prematurely (28 to 32 weeks of gestation) may have reduced levels of lactase, because this enzyme increases in the fetus late in the third trimester.

Ways to modify your diet

You can't control your body's ability to produce lactase. But you can usually control the symptoms of lactose intolerance by modifying your diet and using special products made for people with this condition.

Milk products contain essential nutrients, such as calcium, Vitamin A and D, riboflavin, and phosphorus. Avoiding milk entirely can make it difficult to get the amount of calcium you need for healthy bones and teeth.

- **Drink less milk more often.** Sip small servings of milk- the smaller the serving, the less likely it is to cause gastrointestinal problems.
- **Save milk for mealtimes.** Drink milk with other foods, rather than drinking milk alone. This slows the digestive process, so you reduce the chance of experiencing lactose intolerance.
- **Experiment with an assortment of dairy products.** Not all dairy products have the same amount of lactose.
- **Buy lactose or lactose free products.**
- **Watch out for hidden lactose.** You may be overloading on lactose without realizing it. Although milk and foods made from milk are the only natural sources of lactose, this sugar is often added to prepared foods. Before putting these items in your cart, check their labels for milk, lactose, whey, milk byproducts, fat-free dry milk powder, malted milk, buttermilk, sweet or sour cream, margarine, sweetened condensed milk and dry milk solids.
- **Seek other sources of calcium.** If you can't tolerate dairy products in large amounts, you can get calcium in broccoli, leafy greens, canned salmon, almonds, oranges, certain kinds of tofu and soy milk, and calcium-fortified breads and juices. Calcium supplements can be helpful for some people to get the daily calcium requirement.
- **Use fruit juice, applesauce or water instead of milk products in baked goods.** The texture of the food may change slightly.
- **Lactaid (Lactase enzyme) tablets may help you digest foods with lactose in them.** Take the tablet when you start eating foods with lactose in them.

Food groups

Milk and milk products-

Lactose free- 100% lactose-free milk, soy milk

Lactose containing- Milks (whole, skim, 1%, 2%, buttermilk), sweet acidophilus milk, lactose reduced milk, sweetened condensed milk, instant hot chocolate and cocoa mixes, cheese, yogurt, half and half, ice cream, sour cream, cottage cheese, butter and margarine, cream cheese, whipping cream and milk shakes.

Not all dairy products have the same amount of lactose. For example, hard cheeses such as cheddar and Swiss have small amounts of lactose and generally cause no symptoms.

Vegetables and fruits-

Lactose free- fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables without added milk or milk products, tomato paste and puree, tomato and spaghetti sauces without cheese, tomato juice or soup.

Lactose containing- creamed or breaded vegetables, packaged and dried potato mixes, tomato and spaghetti sauce with cheese, creamed soups, scalloped or butter added vegetables, instant potatoes

Breads and grains-

Lactose free- water based breads(Italian, French, Jewish rye), rice and popcorn cakes, graham crackers, rusks, Pareve-Jewish bakery products, cooked and dry cereals without added milk solids, pasta, rice, oats, barley, cornmeal, bulgar and other plain grains.

Lactose containing- the following made with milk or milk products; breads, rolls, English muffins, bagels, biscuits, muffins, pancakes, sweet rolls, waffles, crackers, instant and dry cereals with added milk products, some packaged grain mixes, packaged macaroni mixes

Meat or Meat substitutes-

Lactose free- beans, peas, and lentils (plain), peanut butter, all nuts and seeds, beef, lamb, veal, pork, wild game, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, kosher prepared meat products, and tofu.

Lactose containing- breaded, battered or creamed meat, fish or poultry, lunch meats, hot dogs, sausage, some brands of egg substitutes and powdered eggs.

Fats and oils-

Lactose free- bacon, lard, butter, margarine without milk derivatives (whey), salad dressing without cheese or milk, vegetable oils, olives, most non dairy creamers, mayonnaise, gravy made without milk or milk products.

Lactose containing- cream, half and half, sour cream, cream cheese, chip dips, some types of margarine, salad dressing with cheese or milk, whipped toppings.

Sweets and desserts-

Lactose free- angel food cake, gelatin, fruit ice, fruit Popsicles, fruit roll ups, hard candy, gum drops, jelly beans, licorice, fruit pie fillings

Lactose containing- ice cream, ice milk, some brands of sherbert, soufflé, mousse, custard, packaged dessert mixes, milk chocolate, toffee, caramel, butterscotch, cakes and frostings, animal cookies.

Beverages-

Lactose free- Postum, lactose-free nutritional supplements (Sustacal, Ensure, Nutren), vegetable juice, fruit juices and drinks, tea, carbonated beverages, beer, wine, distilled spirits (gin, rum, etc.), cocoa powder, most coffee.

Lactose containing- instant iced tea, instant coffee, Ovaltine, chocolate drink mixes, cordials, milk based nutritional supplements (carnation instant breakfast).

Soups-

Lactose free- bouillon, broth, meat or vegetable stock soups, bisques and chowders made with water, soy milk, or 100% lactose free milk.

Lactose containing- cream soup, canned and dehydrated soup mixes containing milk products.

Miscellaneous-

Lactose free- popcorn, plain pretzels, plain potato and corn tortilla chips, salsa, mustard, ketchup, pickles, uncreamed horseradish, relish, sauces made without milk or milk products, sugar, honey, jams and jellies, maple and corn syrup, molasses, herbs, spices, salt and pepper.

Lactose containing- cream or cheese sauces, ranch-style or cheese-flavored snack pretzels or chips, cheese curls, sugar substitutes with lactose added, medications and vitamin/mineral supplements with lactose added.