

LIVING WITH LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

Lactose intolerance is not as widespread as people think. It is not an “all-or-nothing” condition. Lactose intolerance is more common among non-Caucasians, may be genetic, and becomes more common with age. It can also occur as a result of certain illnesses, such as gastrointestinal tract disorders. The diagnosis can only be confirmed with medical testing. The lactose intolerant individual should be aware that lactose is not restricted to dairy products but is found in a variety of foods and beverages. The required degree of lactose restriction is highly individualized and depends on the amount of lactose necessary to produce symptoms. Symptoms of lactose intolerance include bloating, gas, upset stomach, nausea, cramps, and diarrhea. It should be noted that many of the same symptoms can be caused by other health problems or simply by the consumption of beans, fruits, or cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage and broccoli.

Many people who think they have a milk allergy are actually lactose intolerant or lactase deficient (also called lactase non-persistence). Lactose is a sugar that requires the enzyme lactase, found in the cells lining the small intestine, for its proper digestion. True milk allergies are fairly uncommon and occur mostly in children. Allergic symptoms are more severe than intolerances and include hives, breathing difficulties, and other serious problems. Another reason to distinguish between an allergy and intolerance is because a person with lactose intolerance may consume many other dairy products such as yogurt, cheese, and lactose-reduced milk.

Lactose is commonly found in dairy products such as milk, yogurt, ice cream, cheese, and butter. It is also found in some unexpected places. Read labels carefully for lactose content. Terms most commonly used include dry milk solids, whey, and casein. The best way to manage lactose intolerance is by modifying your diet. There are many options to manage lactose intolerance through dietary choices.

FOODS CONTAINING LACTOSE

BEVERAGES: cordials, liqueurs, drinks prepared with chocolate, malted milk powder, Ovaltine, some cocoas, milk (whole, low-fat, evaporated, condensed, cream, buttermilk, eggnog, acidophilus, and Lactaid), some instant coffees.

GRAIN PRODUCTS: Any bread, cereal, or crackers made with milk. Pancake, waffle, crepes, or flour mix made with milk.

CHEESES: All cheeses. The highest lactose content is in low-fat and creamed cottage cheese, and ricotta. The lowest lactose content is in aged natural cheese; Brie, Gruyere, Limburger, and Monterey.

DESSERTS: Cakes, cookies, piecrust, pie fillings made with milk, custards, ice cream, sherbet (sorbetts are lactose-free), and milk-based puddings.

FATS: Butter, cream, sour cream, cream cheese, some margarine and salad dressings (check label for lactose content).

SOUPS: Commercial prepared soups with added milk products and creamed-based soups.

MISCELLANEOUS: Butterscotch, caramels, certain medications, cream sauces, gravies, milk chocolate candies, some diabetic products, molasses, packaged mixes for cookies and cakes, toffee, cold cuts, frostings, sugar substitutes (Equal), egg substitutes, and yogurt.

TIPS TO MANAGING LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

1. Try non-dairy alternatives such as calcium fortified soymilk, rice milk, or almond milk.
2. Take an over-the counter lactose-digesting enzyme (Dairy Ease or Lactaid) 30 minutes before eating regular lactose containing products.
3. Try lactose-reduced milk. Note that Lactaid milk or lactose-reduced milk may still contain a trace amount of lactose.
4. Try aged cheeses or soy cheese. Cheeses lowest in lactose (≤ 1 gram of lactose per 1 oz.) include: Swiss, blue, cheddar, cream cheese, Colby, and Parmesan. Soft cheeses, with the exception of cream cheese, are usually rich in lactose and should be avoided.
5. Depending on individual tolerance, most persons with lactase non-persistence can consume smaller portions of milk (4-6 oz.) at a time without developing symptoms. Most self-described lactose-intolerant individuals can readily tolerate 2 cups (480 ml) of milk daily if ingested in divided doses.

LIVING WITH LACTOSE INTOLERANCE CONTINUED

There is no reason for people with lactose intolerance to push themselves to drink milk. Certain green leafy vegetables, beans, and bean products, such as tofu, and calcium-fortified products are rich in calcium. Be aware that when dairy products are limited, intakes of phosphorus, Vitamins A and D, and riboflavin may also be inadequate. Insufficient calcium intakes could lead to bone loss and may result in osteoporosis. Calcium supplementation is indicated if the diet does not provide adequate calcium. 400-500 mg of calcium twice a day (800-1000mg) with meals is a recommended amount for the average adult. If you are taking more than 1500 mg per day, check with your health care practitioner or a Registered Dietitian.

CALCIUM CONTENT IN LACTOSE-FREE FOODS

	Serving	Calcium
Baked Beans (vegetarian)	1 cup	128 mg
Black Beans, cooked	1 cup	140 mg
Bok Choy, cooked	1 cup	158 mg
Bread, Whole-wheat	2 slices	47 mg
Broccoli	1 cup	178 mg
Brussels sprouts, boiled	1 cup	46 mg
Calcium fortified orange juice	8 oz (1 cup)	250-330 mg
Chick peas, canned	1 cup	77 mg
Collards, frozen, boiled	½ cup	179 mg
Corn tortilla	1 each	42 mg
Dried Figs	10 figs	269 mg
Kidney Beans	1 cup	90 mg
Northern Beans	1 cup	120 mg
Orange	1 medium	52 mg
Pinto Beans	1 cup	82 mg
Raisins	2/3 cup	53 mg
Salmon, canned with bones	3 oz.	285
Sardines , drained with bones	3 oz	372 mg
Soybeans (edamame), cooked	½ cup	90 mg
Soy milk (regular)	1 cup	10 mg
Soy milk (calcium fortified)	1 cup	300 mg
Sweet Potato, baked	1 medium	32 mg
Tofu, raw (calcium-sulfate)	½ cup (3 oz)	125-150 mg
Total Cereal, General Mills	¾ cup	250 mg
Turnip greens, cooked	½ cup	100 mg

Bear in mind that caffeine, large amounts of phosphorus or dietary fiber, cigarette smoking, and alcohol may prevent or limit the absorption of calcium. Calcium is better absorbed with Vitamin D, an acidic environment (citrus fruits/ fruit juices), generally with meals, and in divided doses.

Lactose intolerance can be successfully managed through diet. Dairy products are the main culprits in lactose intolerance. However, it is possible to live lactose-free and have a diet rich in calcium and other nutrients.

Check our website: www.uhs.berkeley.edu
to learn more about this medical concern or others.

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