
Healthy Eating Guidelines for Managing Lactose Intolerance

Lactose is a type of sugar found in milk and milk products. It is also added to some processed and prepared foods like salad dressings. An enzyme called lactase is needed for your body to break down (digest) lactose.

Lactose intolerance happens when your body does not have enough lactase. You may make less lactase as you get older, or you may lose the enzyme when you have a medical condition such as Crohn's disease, take some medications or due to radiation treatment. It is very rare to be born without the ability to make lactase enzyme.

Lactose intolerance is not an allergy to milk.

Without the lactase enzyme, or enough of this enzyme, your body does not break down all the lactose into smaller parts for digestion and absorption. The undigested lactose goes into your large intestine where it is fermented by bacteria causing symptoms such as:

- bloating
- gas
- cramping
- nausea
- diarrhea
- weight loss (in children).

Your symptoms depend on the amount of lactose you eat at one time and the amount of lactase enzyme in your body.

If you are lactose intolerant you may benefit from eating less lactose. Most people with lactose intolerance can tolerate some lactose in their diet. A registered dietitian can help you plan your meals and snacks to get the nutrients your body needs.



Steps you can take

- Limit your intake of foods that cause you discomfort. You may be able to tolerate certain lactose-containing foods while other people with lactose intolerance cannot.
 - Try small amounts, 60 to 125 mL ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of the following foods or beverages with your meals. Small servings have less lactose:
 - cheese cottage
 - hard, aged cheese like cheddar, Swiss or Parmesan
 - yogurt
 - kefir
 - milk pudding, made from 2% milk or lower
 - sour cream.
 - If these amounts cause you discomfort, try a smaller amount.
- Keep track of what you eat and drink and any symptoms you may have. It can help you identify and track what causes you discomfort.
- Choose lactose-free or foods low in lactose, such as:
 - lactose-free, lactose-reduced or lactose-hydrolyzed milk and yogurt, or yogurt with live bacterial cultures
 - plant-based beverages such as fortified almond, coconut, oat, pea, rice and soy beverage
 - hard cheese or lactose-free cheese
 - casein or soy-based products instead of cheese
 - Note: according to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, “lactose-free” means that there is no measurable lactose in the food. “Lactose-reduced” means that at least 25% of the lactose in the product has been removed.

- Carefully read food labels and ingredient lists for sources of lactose. The following words on the ingredient list means the product contains lactose:

milk	milk solids	whey
lactose	curds	cheese flavour
malted milk	non-fat milk solids	buttermilk
cream	non-fat milk powder	sour cream
yogurt		

- The following ingredients do not contain lactose: lactic acid, lactalbumin, lactate and casein.
- Try lactase enzyme drops, tablets or products made with these preparations to reduce the lactose in milk or dairy products.
 - Tablets are taken before eating foods that have lactose.
 - Enzyme drops can be added to milk before drinking.
 - For the best results, follow the instructions included with the product or ask your pharmacist for advice. pharmacies.
 - Lactase drops and lactase tablets are available at most grocery stores and pharmacies.
- Ask your pharmacist about lactose in your medications; it may not be listed on the label. Your pharmacist should be able to provide a lactose-free substitute.

Special Considerations:

Many foods that contain lactose are also important sources of calcium and vitamin D. If you avoid lactose-containing foods, you will need to find other sources of these nutrients. The following information will help you to make healthy choices while managing your symptoms.

Calcium

Choose canned salmon and sardines (with the bones), fortified plant-based beverages such as calcium-fortified almond, coconut, rice and soy beverages, and calcium-fortified 100% fruit juices.

Shake calcium-fortified liquids well before use as the calcium can settle to the bottom of the container.

Talk to a registered dietitian if you are concerned that you are not getting enough calcium from food and if you should take a calcium supplement.

Vitamin D

Lactose-free sources of vitamin D include fish, liver and egg yolks.

Vitamin D fortified foods include some plant-based beverages such as soy and rice and non-hydrogenated margarine.

Probiotics

Probiotics have not been shown to improve lactose tolerance.



Additional Resources

Food Sources of Calcium

- <http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfrUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==>

Food Sources of Lactose

- <https://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=J8XuWw0=&PreviewHandout=bA==>

Food and Symptom Journal

- <https://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=J8frWQ0=&PreviewHandout=bA==>

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