

# Common Questions About Lactose Intolerance



## What is lactose intolerance?

People who are lactose intolerant have a hard time digesting the sugar (called lactose) that is naturally found in milk and may experience discomfort after consuming dairy foods.

## How do I know if I'm lactose intolerant?

Stomachaches, bloating or gassiness can have many different causes. Your doctor can help you find out if you are lactose intolerant or if your digestive discomfort is caused by something else.

## I used to drink milk all the time when I was a child.

### Why am I more sensitive to dairy now?

Your body makes an enzyme called lactase to help digest the lactose in milk. As an adult, your body may be making less of this enzyme than when you were younger. This may make it more difficult to tolerate dairy.

## If I am lactose intolerant, do I have to avoid all dairy foods?

Lactose intolerance is a very individual condition. Most people can continue to enjoy low-fat and fat-free dairy foods by drinking low-lactose or lactose-free milk, having small amounts of milk with meals or including natural cheeses or yogurt in their diet.

## Is lactose intolerance the same thing as a milk allergy?

No, being lactose intolerant is not the same as having a milk allergy. A milk allergy is caused by a reaction to the protein in milk. This is different from lactose intolerance, which occurs when your body has a hard time digesting the natural sugar (or carbohydrate) in milk. While people with milk allergies must avoid dairy, avoidance is not necessary for those who are lactose intolerant.

## Can't I get all the nutrients I need without dairy foods in my diet?

Nutrition experts advise that you still try to eat dairy foods to best meet your nutrient recommendations. The dairy food group (milk, cheese and yogurt) provides key nutrients such as calcium, potassium and vitamin D. It's difficult to get enough of these nutrients without dairy foods in your diet.

## Can children be lactose intolerant?

Lactose intolerance is less common in young children. If you think your child is lactose intolerant, talk to your family doctor, pediatrician or a dietitian.

### FAST FACTS ABOUT LACTOSE-FREE MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

Lactose-free milk is real milk, just without the lactose, and is a solution to help you get all the great nutrients found in regular milk.

- **HOW THEY'RE MADE:** Lactose-free dairy products are the same as regular dairy products except the lactose (milk sugar) is already broken down or removed for you.
- **GREAT TASTING:** People like the taste of lactose-free milk more than some of the available non-dairy alternatives.<sup>2</sup>
- **AVAILABLE OPTIONS:** A wide variety of lactose-free dairy products – including reduced-fat, low-fat, fat-free and chocolate milk, ice cream and cottage cheese – are available.



These health and nutrition organizations support 3-Every-Day™ of Dairy, a science-based education program encouraging Americans to consume the recommended three daily servings of nutrient-rich low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products, to help improve overall health.



American Academy of Pediatrics  
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eat right. American Dietetic Association



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 7th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S Government Printing Office, January 2011.

Note: The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends 3 daily servings of low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products for those ages 9 and older, 2.5 cups for children ages 4 to 8 years, and 2 cups for children ages 2 to 3 years.

<sup>2</sup> Moskowitz HR, et al. J Sensory Studies 2009;24:731-748