

# Lactose or Dairy Intolerance

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



## What is lactose intolerance?

**Lactose** is the natural sugar in milk. Some people can not digest lactose well. When lactose does not get digested you may have **gas, bloating, cramps, or 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.

## Is milk allergy the same as lactose intolerance?

**Milk allergy** is not the same as lactose intolerance. People with milk allergy are allergic to the protein in milk. Milk allergy is very rare. 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.

## Why do I 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. Everyone needs to get plenty of food high in calcium to build strong bones.

## Non-dairy sources of calcium

### Good sources of calcium:

- ▲ soybeans
- ▲ tofu
- ▲ collard greens
- ▲ salmon
- ▲ refried beans
- ▲ baked beans



### Fair sources of calcium:

- ▲ clams and oysters
- ▲ bean sprouts
- ▲ mustard or turnip greens
- ▲ almonds
- ▲ oranges
- ▲ corn tortillas



## 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 **acidophilus milk** or **lactose-reduced milk** in the dairy section in the supermarket. They taste good and are easier to digest if you have lactose intolerance. Ask the WIC staff about these types of milk if you would like to buy them with a WIC check.
- ▲ 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 non fat milk to make your own lactose-reduced milk.

## Lactose in dairy foods

High



Milk

Medium



Ice cream

Medium-Low



Yogurt

Low



Cottage  
Cheese

Very Low



Hard  
Cheese