



General Guidelines for Managing Lactose Intolerance

- Lactose is a sugar found in certain dairy products. Many adults have trouble digesting foods containing lactose. This is often due to low levels of the enzyme (lactase) in the intestine that is needed to break down lactose. Patients with intestinal disease or injury may also experience lactose intolerance. Symptoms of lactose intolerance include nausea, bloating, gas, diarrhea and/or abdominal pain/cramping. These symptoms generally occur 30 minutes to 2 hours after eating a food containing lactose.
- The amount of lactose an individual can tolerate varies from person to person. Many people with lactose intolerance can tolerate some lactose-containing foods by adjusting the type, amount and timing of these foods. Some patients may need to (or may choose to) limit or eliminate these foods completely. If you wish to include lactose-containing foods in your diet, the following suggestions may help. Always talk with your doctor before making changes to your prescribed diet.
 - Add new foods one at a time; decrease the amount, or eliminate the food, if symptoms occur.
 - Most people with lactose intolerance do not need to avoid all dairy products, for example:
 - Cultured yogurt contains live cultures that naturally help digest lactose. Many people with lactose intolerance tolerate cultured yogurt well. Check labels to see if a yogurt contains live cultures.
 - Hard cheese is low in lactose and is usually well tolerated
 - If you wish to drink milk, try taking small amounts (1/2 cup at a time). Many people can tolerate up to 2 cups of milk per day when taken in smaller servings spread out over the course of the day.
 - Foods that contain lactose may be better tolerated if they are eaten with a meal.
- For those who need to limit or eliminate lactose, the UVAHS handout on “Lactose Content of Common Foods” (available at www.GInutrition.virginia.edu) can help identify sources of lactose. Note that many people with lactose intolerance can tolerate 12 grams or more of lactose per day, particularly if the suggestions above are followed.
- Foods made from certain dairy products (such as pudding, cream soups, cream or cheese sauces, etc.) also contain lactose. The amount of lactose in a product will depend on the amount of dairy products used. Other foods such as baked items, instant mixes, salad dressings, etc. may also contain lactose. The following ingredients suggest a product contains lactose:

Butter	Curds	Milk by-products	Skim milk solids
Caseinates	Dry milk solids	Milk solids	Whey
Cheese	Lactose	Milk sugar	Yogurt
Cream	Milk	Non-fat dry milk powder	

- Lactose can also be found in medications. Check for lactose on the label, although it does not have to be listed; if you are very sensitive to lactose and have persistent symptoms, ask your pharmacist to help you. Ask your doctor to prescribe a lactose-free alternative if one exists.
- Specialty Products: If you are not able to tolerate lactose-containing foods using the above suggestions, special products are available. Keep in mind, not everyone with lactose intolerance needs special products; many people can tolerate regular dairy products by adjusting the type and amount consumed. You may want to try the tips provided in this handout before trying the more costly specialty products.

100% Lactose Reduced Milk

- 100% lactose reduced milk is available in the dairy section of most grocery stores.
- Available in nonfat, 1%, 2%, and whole milk varieties.
- Lactose reduced milk contains the same nutrition, including calcium and vitamin D as regular milk.
- Lactose reduced milk does cost a bit more than regular milk.
- Lactose reduced milk may taste sweeter than regular milk.

Lactase Enzyme Supplements

- These products contain the enzyme lactase, which is needed for the digestion of lactose.
- Available in caplet or chewable form.
- Lactase enzyme supplements may not be needed with some dairy products, such as cultured yogurt and cheese.
- Most products recommend a dose of 9000 lactase units be taken with each dairy product. This amount may not always be needed; you may want to start with a smaller dose and increase only if symptoms persist.
- Both brand name and store brand varieties are available. Store brands are often more cost-effective than name brands, however, prices will vary depending on store, location, and quantity purchased.

Other Products

- Soy milk, rice milk and almond milk are lactose free. If you plan to use these products as an alternative calcium and/or vitamin D source, read labels carefully and choose a brand which specifically states it contains these nutrients and in what amounts.

Calcium and Vitamin D

- If you are on a low lactose diet, discuss your calcium and vitamin D intake with your physician or dietitian. Studies have shown that individuals with lactose intolerance often do not take in enough of these nutrients. Inadequate calcium and vitamin D intake increases the risk of osteoporosis. A dietitian can help you determine whether you are getting enough of these nutrients in your diet.

Additional information on lactose intolerance can be found at the University of Virginia Health System/ Digestive Health Center of Excellence website at: www.GInutrition.virginia.edu (click on Patient Education Handouts and scroll down to Lactose Intolerance)