

Lactose Intolerance

What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance occurs when the body can not digest the main sugar found in dairy products such as milk, ice cream and cheese.

This sugar is called “Lactose.”

Our body needs an enzyme called “lactase” in order to digest this sugar. Individuals with inadequate amounts of this enzyme are unable to digest the sugar properly. Decreased enzyme amounts may be due to the enzyme being blocked from infections occurring in the intestine, medications, radiation treatments or diarrhea.

What are the symptoms of lactose intolerance?

A few common symptoms include:

- Stomach cramping
- Gas
- Bloating
- Diarrhea
- Nausea

These symptoms are experienced after eating or drinking dairy products such as milk, cheese and ice cream.

What should i do if i am lactose intolerant?

Watch for foods with hidden sources of milk, such as pudding, custard, ice cream, cream soups, cream pies, gravies or instant breakfast drinks. It may be found in some medications so discuss your medications with your doctor or pharmacist.

- Drink and eat dairy in smaller amounts and test how you feel; some individuals can consume dairy products in small amounts.
- Try dairy products with less lactose, such as cottage cheese, yogurt, buttermilk, processed cheese and sour cream. Some individuals can tolerate these foods well.
- Try a milk substitute such as soy milk and Sweet Acidophilus milk, Lactaid® milk and other nondairy products. Many of these products come in a variety of flavors.
- Try products that help you digest lactose, such as lactase pills or drops. These products are taken just before a meal containing large amounts of lactose. They may be purchased at most local drug stores. Talk to your doctor about trying some of these products.