

This resource is for people who experience gut symptoms such as diarrhoea, bloating, or gut pain with lactose.

What is lactose?

Lactose is a type of sugar found naturally in animal milk products, like cow or goat milk, yoghurt and some cheeses. It is also added to some processed and pre-prepared foods.

What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance is when your body does not break down lactose properly. It is NOT a milk allergy. It does not cause permanent harm to your body but symptoms can be uncomfortable.

Why do I have lactose intolerance?

- Lactose intolerance can occur at any age and may be life-long or temporary.
- Lactose intolerance can occur due to several reasons:
 - If your body does not make enough **lactase** (a digestive enzyme that is needed to break down lactose)
 - Gastrointestinal conditions/surgeries
 - Infection
 - Cancer treatments
 - Not consuming dairy or milk-based products for long periods of time.

What are the symptoms of lactose intolerance?

- Bloating
- Indigestion
- Stomach pain/cramps
- Urgency to go to the toilet
- Diarrhoea
- Excessive wind

What can I eat if I am lactose intolerant?

- You do NOT need to avoid all dairy foods.
- Most people can tolerate some lactose in their diet. This varies from person to person.
- Choose low lactose or lactose-free milk and dairy foods.
- Check food or drink labels to identify any ingredients that contain a lot of lactose.

High lactose (limit or avoid)	Low lactose or lactose-free
Cow's milk	Lactose free cow's milk
Goat's milk	Dairy free milks such as soy, almond, rice or oat milk (choose products with 100mg of calcium per 100mL)
Flavoured milk	Lactose free yoghurt*
Milk based drinks e.g. smoothies or iced coffees	Hard/matured cheeses e.g. cheddar, parmesan, feta or Swiss
Yoghurts	Lactose free ice cream or custard
Soft cheeses e.g. cottage cheese, ricotta, camembert, brie	Dark chocolate
Ice cream	Some milk-based protein powders (eg. Whey protein isolate) or plant-based protein powders
Dairy desserts e.g. cheesecake, custards, trifle	
Dishes that contain dairy based sauces e.g. tuna mornay, frittata, scrambled eggs, quiche, lasagne, cauliflower in white sauce, potato bake	
Milk or white chocolate	*Some yoghurts with lactose may be well tolerated, as the bacterial cultures help to break down the lactose e.g. probiotic/greek yoghurt.
Milk solids or milk powder	
Milk based protein powders	

How else can I manage my symptoms?

- Spread out your intake of lactose-containing food and drink throughout the day.
- Some medicines also contain lactose. Check with your pharmacist if you have any questions.
- Lactase enzyme products (e.g. Lacteeze, Lacto-Free) in the form of tablets or drops are available at most pharmacies. These can help break down the lactose in milk and milk products. Discuss this with your pharmacist.

How can I get enough calcium if I have lactose intolerance?

- People with lactose intolerance may be at risk of not getting enough calcium.
- Calcium is important for bone health. It is found in many lactose containing foods and drinks. If you do not get enough calcium, your bones can become weak and are more likely to break. This is called osteoporosis.
- Choose lactose-free milk and dairy products and other calcium-rich dairy free foods. Choose products with at least 100 mg calcium per 100 mL when reading the nutrition information panel.
- Have **2-3 serves of dairy/dairy alternatives per day**. This may be different depending on your age, gender or life stage.

An example of 1 serve of dairy/dairy alternatives is:

- 2 slices (40g) hard cheese
- 1 cup (250 mL) soy milk fortified with calcium or lactose-free milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (200g) yoghurt or soy yoghurt fortified with calcium

Other foods that contain calcium are:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (100g) fish with edible bones e.g. canned salmon or sardines*
- 100g firm tofu made with calcium*
- Nuts and seeds e.g. almonds, sesame seeds, tahini paste
- Foods with added calcium e.g. breakfast cereal or breads
- Green leafy vegetables e.g. bok choy, broccoli, spinach
- Baked beans and legumes e.g. kidney beans

* These are the best non-dairy sources of calcium. They provide the same amount of calcium as 1 serve of dairy.

For more information on calcium visit the Osteoporosis Australia website:

<https://www.osteoporosis.org.au/calcium>

Summary

- People with lactose intolerance can tolerate some lactose in their diet. This varies from person to person.
- Symptoms of lactose intolerance may be temporary.
- If you are following a lactose-free diet, you may be at risk of not getting enough calcium. Include lactose-free milk and dairy products and other high calcium dairy free foods every day.

For further information, contact your dietitian or nutritionist: _____