

## Lactose-Free/Low-Lactose Diet

One of the most common food intolerances is an intolerance to lactose, the sugar in milk. Symptoms of lactose intolerance include gas, bloating, nausea, stomach cramping, and diarrhea. If you suspect this includes you, a low-lactose or lactose-free diet is warranted. Lactose intolerance can be caused by not producing enough of the enzyme *lactase* to break down the lactose in your food, or it may be a result of damage to the small intestine which can occur in conditions such as Celiac disease and Crohn's disease.

### Foods Containing Lactose (Avoid)

Lactose is found in dairy products, including but not limited to:

- Milk (including goat's milk)
- Yogurt
- Cottage cheese
- Soft cheese (brie, ricotta, etc)
- Dry milk solids or milk solids
- Dry milk powder
- Whey protein concentrate
- Cream cheese
- Sour cream
- Cream
- Ice cream
- Chocolate/candies

Some people can tolerate small amounts of lactose, such as the amount in 1-2 tablespoons of sour cream or cream cheese. To test your level of tolerance, eliminate all sources of lactose and then add small portions back in, such as 1 tablespoon sour cream at a time, and monitor for symptoms. If no symptoms occur, you can try increasing this to 2 tablespoons and see how you feel. Experiment with small portions of dairy to determine your level of tolerance.

### Dairy Foods Low or Free of Lactose (Choose These)

- Lactose-free milk
- Lactose-free cottage cheese
- Lactose-free yogurt
- Lactose-free ice cream
- Greek or Icelandic yogurts (or yogurts containing "live and active bacterial cultures")
- Kefir
- Butter or ghee
- Most cheese (cheddar, parmesan, swiss, provolone, mozzarella, etc.)

Some brands of Greek/Icelandic yogurts and kefir can be high in lactose. It's important to check the label for "live and active bacterial cultures," and start with a small portion of ¼ cup to see how you tolerate before increasing to a larger portion.

## **Non-Dairy Foods as options**

Plant based milk (soy, almond, pea, oat are examples) Choose a dairy-free milk alternative that is fortified with calcium and vitamin D. It will say on the nutrition facts label if it contains calcium and/or vitamin D. Dairy is a good source of these nutrients, so it is important to replace these nutrients with the dairy alternatives you choose.

- Plant based yogurts, sour creams, cheeses, ice creams

## **Supplements**

Lactase enzymes, such as Lactaid, can be purchased over the counter and taken with lactose-containing foods to help break down lactose and prevent symptoms of lactose intolerance. They come in caplet or chewable form and should be taken with the first bite or drink of food containing lactose.

## **Take home points**

- If you love dairy products, rest assured that having lactose intolerance does not mean you need to avoid all dairy products.
- Follow the tips above to reduce your lactose intake.
- If you continue to have symptoms, follow-up with your physician or registered dietitian.