

Eating Less Lactose

Managing lactose intolerance through diet

Name: _____

Dietitian: _____

Phone: _____

WHAT IS LACTOSE?

Lactose is a sugar found naturally in milk and dairy products. It can also be added to other processed foods and some medications.

WHAT IS LACTOSE INTOLERANCE?

Lactose intolerance means the gut cannot properly break down lactose. People with this condition do not produce enough of an enzyme called lactase, which is needed to digest lactose. When lactose is not broken down, it passes into the large intestine where bacteria ferment it, producing gas and excess fluid. This causes:^[3]

- Bloating
- Diarrhoea
- Abdominal cramping and gas

Everyone's tolerance is different. Some people can manage small amounts of lactose without any symptoms, while others need to avoid it completely. Lactose intolerance can be temporary or permanent depending on the cause. It is not the same as a milk allergy.

IDENTIFYING LACTOSE IN FOODS

Read ingredient labels carefully. Look for:^[4]

- Lactose, milk, milk solids, or non-fat milk powder
- Whey or curds
- Cheese flavour or modified milk ingredients
- Lactalbumin, lactate, lactic acid, or casein

Label claims to look for:

- "Lactose free" - no measurable lactose
- "Lactose reduced" - lactose reduced by at least 25%

ESTIMATED LACTOSE CONTENT OF COMMON DAIRY PRODUCTS

Approximate lactose content per serving:^[3]

PRODUCT (SERVING SIZE)	LACTOSE (GRAMS)
Sweetened condensed milk, 1/2 cup	20.0 g
Whole, 2%, 1%, skim, or chocolate milk, 1 cup	12.5 g
Evaporated milk, 1/2 cup	12.0 g
Plain yogurt, 3/4 cup	12.0 g

PRODUCT (SERVING SIZE)	LACTOSE (GRAMS)
Goat milk, 1 cup	10.8 g
Buttermilk, 1 cup	10.0 g
Ice cream, 1/2 cup	5.0-6.0 g
Yogurt with probiotics, 3/4 cup	4.0-9.0 g
Creamed cottage cheese, 1/2 cup	3.0 g
Cheddar or processed cheese, 1.5 oz	0.8 g
Butter, 1 tsp	Trace
Lactaid milk, 1 cup	0.1 g

TIPS FOR REDUCING LACTOSE

- Choose lactose-free or low-lactose dairy products.
- Buy yogurt and kefir with live bacterial cultures (probiotics); these are usually better tolerated. Look for lactose-reduced yogurts.
- Use lactose-free milk, calcium-fortified soy milk, or rice milk in cooking and baking.
- If you can tolerate some lactose, spread intake throughout the day and eat dairy with meals rather than alone.
- Try casein or soy-based cheese alternatives.
- Use lactase enzyme drops or tablets (Lactaid); take with food that contains lactose. Drops can be added to milk 24 hours in advance.
- Check labels on margarines; some contain lactose unless labelled "non-dairy".
- Some commercial salad dressings contain lactose; try a simple oil-and-vinegar dressing.
- Ask your pharmacist whether your medications contain lactose.

CALCIUM AND BONE HEALTH

Calcium is essential for strong bones. If dairy is reduced, get calcium from other sources. Estimated daily intakes for Australians:^[1]

AGE GROUP	CALCIUM (MG/DAY)
0-6 months	200 mg
7-12 months	260 mg
1-3 years	700 mg
4-8 years	1,000 mg
9-18 years	1,300 mg
19-50 years	1,000 mg
51-70 years (men)	1,000 mg
51-70 years (women)	1,200 mg
Over 70 years	1,200 mg
Pregnant (14-18 years)	1,300 mg
Pregnant (19-50 years)	1,000 mg

Non-dairy calcium sources include salmon and sardines with bones, leafy green vegetables (spinach, bok choy, kale), calcium-fortified soy and rice beverages, tofu, almonds, and legumes.

Speak with your doctor about whether a calcium or vitamin D supplement is right for you.

FOODS WITH AND WITHOUT LACTOSE

FOODS GENERALLY TOLERATED	FOODS TO LIMIT OR AVOID
Lactose-free milk (Lactaid, Lacteeze, Natrel lactose-free) Soy, rice, coconut, almond, hemp, or oat beverages Hard cheeses: cheddar, colby, gouda, blue, parmesan, mozzarella, swiss, camembert, feta Lactose-free cheese Creams: half and half, light, and whipping cream (1 tbsp or less) Lactose-reduced or probiotic yogurt Lactose-free ice cream Sorbet	Regular milk (skim, 1%, 2%, homogenised, chocolate) Goat milk and goat milk products Condensed, powdered, or evaporated milk Buttermilk Regular yogurt and yogurt drinks Ricotta and creamed cottage cheese Sour cream (more than 1 tbsp) All creams if more than 1 tbsp Cheese sauce

AUSTRALIAN RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

- **Dietitians Australia:** www.dietitiansaustralia.org.au - Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian near you
- **Dairy Australia:** www.dairy.com.au - Information on dairy nutrition and lactose-free products
- **Osteoporosis Australia:** 1800 242 141 | www.osteoporosis.org.au - Bone health and calcium resources
- **Eat for Health (NHMRC):** www.eatforhealth.gov.au - Australian dietary guidelines and calcium recommendations

REFERENCES

1. National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). (2006). Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au>
2. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025. US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Health and Human Services.
3. Suchy FJ, et al. (2010). NIH Consensus Development Conference Statement: Lactose Intolerance and Health. NIH Consensus and State-of-the-Science Statements, 27(2).
4. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). (2024). Nutrition labelling. <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au>