

Title: Lactose Intolerance: Diagnosis and Treatment

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Abstract: Lactose intolerance is a sensitivity to lactose in food. Pts will often have diarrhea, bloating, gas, and abdominal cramps after consuming high-lactose meals. This pamphlet describes lactose intolerance and outlines diet and behavior modifications to control lactose intolerance symptoms.

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## Is lactose in any foods besides dairy?

There are several potential “hidden” sources of lactose in many prepared foods such as cereals, baking mixes, soups, and salad dressings.

Check ingredient labels for the following indicators of lactose: whey, milk byproducts, nonfat dry milk powder, malted milk, buttermilk and dry milk solids, milk, lactose.

Medications often contain small amounts of lactose. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you think your medications are exacerbating your lactose intolerance.

### For further information on lactose intolerance:

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse  
[www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov)

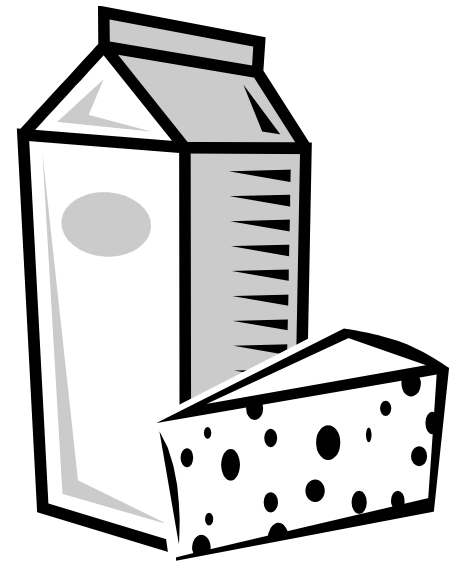
International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) Inc.  
[www.iffgd.org](http://www.iffgd.org)

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# Lactose Intolerance

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## Diagnosis and Treatment



**University of Minnesota  
Primary Care Clerkship  
Patient Education Tool**

## Understanding Lactose Intolerance



### What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance is a sensitivity to lactose in food, causing the following symptoms:

- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Abdominal cramps
- Bloating
- Gas

These symptoms usually begin between 30 minutes to 2 hours after eating a meal containing lactose, commonly found in dairy products.

Consult your doctor if you think you may have lactose intolerance. They may recommend a trial of a lactose-free diet or diagnostic tests.

### What causes lactose intolerance?

Lactose is a sugar commonly found in dairy products. Lactose is digested by an enzyme called lactase, which is made by cells that line your small intestine. Lactase breaks lactose down into simpler sugars that can be absorbed into the bloodstream. Some people lack the lactase enzyme. Without this enzyme, lactose isn't digested and moves into the colon where intestinal bacteria have to break it down. This creates the symptoms commonly seen with lactose intolerance.

### How do I control lactose intolerance?

You may not have to completely avoid dairy foods. Most people can tolerate one 8 oz. glass of milk per meal without adverse effects. You



may even be able to increase this amount by gradually increasing portion sizes as you monitor your symptoms. Alternative forms of dairy often have lower levels of lactose than milk; try aged cheeses and yogurt. Drink milk with other foods to slow digestion and reduce symptoms. Yogurt with live cultures may aid in lactose digestion. A dietitian can help you develop a diet which supplies you with adequate nutrients and reduces your lactose intolerance symptoms.

*Lactase enzyme tablets or drops may help you eat products containing lactose. The medications are available over-the-counter at most pharmacies. These tablets contain lactase, reducing the amount your body must digest on its own. Drops are added directly to milk 24 hours before you plan to drink it. Tablets should be taken with the first bite of lactose-containing food.*