

Lactose Intolerance

What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance means you have trouble digesting milk and milk products. The condition is most common among Asians, American Indians, Mexican Americans, and African Americans. It is also more common as people get older.

What is the cause?

You have trouble digesting milk because your body cannot break down the natural sugar found in milk, called lactose.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Stomach cramps
- Bloating and gas
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea

Symptoms may start 30 minutes to 2 hours after you eat or drink foods that contain lactose.

You may be able to drink small amounts of milk, especially if you eat other foods with it. Or you may not be able to drink any milk without having symptoms. The body starts making less lactase around the age of 3 years. However, you may not have symptoms until early adulthood or later.

What should I check for on food labels?

If you are very sensitive to lactose, check for ingredients on food labels such as:

- Milk
- Lactose
- Whey
- Curds
- Milk by-products
- Dry milk solids
- Non-fat dry milk powder

Avoid any foods that include these ingredients.

What changes should I make in my diet?

Here are some changes you can make in your diet to help:

- Try nondairy milk, such as soy milk, almond milk, or rice milk.

- Eat other foods that are rich in calcium, such as leafy greens (collard, kale, and mustard), canned salmon and sardines (if the bones are included), broccoli, and Brussels sprouts. Also eat food that has been fortified with calcium, such as orange juice, breads, and breakfast cereals.
- Drink or eat smaller servings of milk products. The smaller the serving, the less likely it is you will have symptoms.
- Eat other foods when you drink milk. This slows the digestive process and lessens symptoms. Most people can have 1/2 to 1 cup of milk with meals without having symptoms.
- Look for lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk, such as Dairy Ease, in your grocery store.
- Try adding the lactase enzyme to ordinary milk. Lactase products, such as Lactaid, are available in drug and grocery stores.
- Eat yogurt that contains an active culture. The active cultures in yogurt make the enzyme (lactase) that breaks down lactose. Check food labels to see your yogurt has active cultures.
- Hard cheeses, such as cheddar, should not cause much of a problem because they don't have a lot of lactose. But be cautious about how much cheese you eat. Cheese is usually high in fat and cholesterol.

Lactose intolerance may get better during pregnancy. If you are pregnant, try small servings of milk several times a day. Starting with small servings may keep you from having symptoms. If you are unable to eat or drink any milk or dairy products, your healthcare provider may prescribe calcium tablets to make sure that you are getting enough calcium during your pregnancy.

How do I choose a calcium supplement?

Milk and milk products are an important source of calcium and vitamin D. It can be hard to get enough of these nutrients without dairy products in your diet.

The daily calcium requirement ranges from 500 mg to 1,500 mg a day for children through adulthood. Children, teens, and women who are pregnant, are breast-feeding, or have gone through menopause are more at risk for low calcium. The more dairy products you can tolerate, the less calcium you will need to take as a supplement.

Getting enough vitamin D (found mainly in milk and a few other vitamin D fortified products) is also a concern, especially if you are over 50 years old or don't get out in the sun much. It is a good idea to choose a calcium supplement that contains vitamin D. Vitamin D helps your body absorb the calcium.

If you cannot get enough calcium and vitamin D from the foods you drink or eat, you may want to talk with your healthcare provider about taking a supplement.

There are many kinds of calcium supplements:

- Calcium carbonate is best absorbed with a meal.
- Calcium citrate can be taken on a full or empty stomach. This kind of calcium may be a better choice for older adults or people who have low levels of stomach acid.

- Calcium phosphate, lactate, and gluconate are well absorbed, but you need to take several pills a day to meet your needs.

Look at how much elemental calcium is in the supplement. If you want to take just 2 calcium pills a day, choose a product that contains 500 to 600 mg of elemental calcium. Calcium is best absorbed if taken several times a day, in amounts of 500 mg or less.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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Sources of Calcium in Foods

Dairy Foods

Food	Serving	Amount of calcium
Plain yogurt, low fat/fat free	1 cup	415 to 450 mg
Fruit yogurt, low fat/fat free	1 cup	345 mg
Milk (fat-free, low-fat, whole)	1 cup	300 mg
Frozen yogurt (fat-free, low-fat, whole)	1 cup	150 to 300 mg
Reduced-fat cheddar cheese	1 oz.	120 mg
American cheese	1 oz.	153 mg
Swiss cheese	1 oz.	224 mg
Cheddar cheese	1 oz	200 mg
Mozzarella, part-skim	1 oz	207 mg
Ricotta Cheese, part skim	1/2 cup	335 mg
Cottage cheese reduced fat	1/2 cup	69 mg
Calcium-fortified cottage cheese	1/2 cup	300 mg
Cheese Pizza	1 slice	155 to 235 mg



Nondairy Foods



Food	Serving	Amount of calcium
Calcium-fortified orange juice	1 cup	300 to 500 mg
Corn Tortillas 6 inch round	3	58 mg
Waffle 7 inch round, whole grain	1	190 mg
Pancakes 5 inch round, whole grain	2	156 mg
Beans (cooked)	1/2 cup	80 to 130 mg
Soybeans (cooked)	1/2 cup	90 mg
Tofu (processed with calcium sulfate)	1/2 cup	253 to 453 mg
Rice milk (calcium fortified)	1 cup	283 mg
Soy milk (calcium-fortified)	1 cup	300 mg
Salmon with small bones	3 oz	180 mg
Broccoli (raw)	1 cup	43 mg
Almonds	1 oz	75 mg
Calcium-fortified cereal	1 cup	250 to 1000 mg
Chinese cabbage, raw	1 cup	59 mg
Turnip greens boiled	1/2 cup	99 mg
Kale, cooked	1 cup	94 mg
Spinach, cooked	1 cup	245 mg
Spinach, raw	1 cup	30 mg

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