

Education

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE is the inability of the small intestine to digest the milk sugar, lactose, due to the lack of the enzyme, lactase. This is NOT a milk allergy; rather it is a digestive intolerance. This is a very common problem. If lactose proceeds undigested through the gastrointestinal tract it leads to abdominal bloating, gas, abdominal pain, and/or diarrhea.

Primary Intolerance: The permanent, inherited inability of the small intestine to produce some or any lactase enzyme.

Secondary Intolerance: The short-term inability to produce lactase. This is common during and after viral intestinal infections and can last days to months. Eventually, the small intestine recovers the ability to produce lactase.

WHAT TO DO...

1. AVOID consuming foods which contain lactose - milk, cheese, ice cream. (yogurt is NOT a problem because the active bacterial cultures digest the lactose)

OR

Take lactase enzyme supplements before or during consumption of these products. Lactase is available in drops and tablets from your pharmacist without a prescription. The amount of lactase needed is variable from one person to the next and needs to be adjusted as needed.
It is safe at any age.

2. Lactose-free and lactose-reduced dairy products are readily available at grocery stores.
(Brand names = Lactaid; DairyEase)
3. Soy based products (milk, cheese, frozen creams) are also alternatives.
(Brand names = White Wave, Eden Soy, Vitasoy, etc.)