



Starting Your Lactose-Free Eating Plan

You have been diagnosed as lactose intolerant. This handout will get you started on what you should and should not eat or drink.

What is lactose and why are some people lactose-intolerant?

Lactose is the type of sugar found in milk and dairy foods. To digest lactose, people need a specific enzyme called lactase in their small intestine. When your body doesn't make enough lactase enzyme, you become lactose-intolerant.

What are symptoms of lactose intolerance?

If someone has trouble digesting lactose, they may have symptoms such as diarrhea or constipation, bloating, stomach pain or excess gas.

What are ways to treat lactose intolerance?

- Avoid lactose-containing milk and dairy products to help ease symptoms.
- Choose lactose-free dairy products when they are available to ease symptoms. If there isn't a lactose-free option, then choose a dairy-free product.
- Take lactase supplements before having milk or dairy products to help reduce symptoms.

Recommended Foods for a Lactose-Free Eating Plan

Food Group	Recommended Foods	Notes
Lactose-free and dairy-free beverages and foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lactose-free milk• Lactose-free yogurt• Almond, rice or soy milk• Coconut plant-based yogurt or cheese• Dairy-free plant-based sour cream• Non-dairy creamers• Non-dairy whipped topping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read ingredient lists and avoid products that list butter, cream, milk, milk solids or whey.
Low-lactose dairy foods	<p>Some people with lactose intolerance can safely eat dairy foods that contain a little lactose (less than 1 gram lactose per serving). You may wish to try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1-2 ounces aged cheese, such as Colby Jack, cheddar or parmesan• 2 tablespoons cream cheese• ½ cup ricotta cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try these foods one at a time, in small amounts, but stop if symptoms return.

Food Group	Recommended Foods	Notes
Meat, poultry, fish, dried beans, eggs and nuts	All, unless prepared with ingredients that contain lactose	To know whether a food is made with ingredients that contain lactose, check the ingredients list. Avoid foods made with butter, cream, milk, milk solids or whey.
Grains	All, unless prepared with ingredients that contain lactose	
Vegetables – fresh, frozen and canned	All, unless prepared with ingredients that contain lactose	
Fruits – fresh, frozen and canned	All, unless prepared with ingredients that contain lactose	
Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oils from olives, legumes, and other vegetables • Plant-based butters and spreads or non-dairy spreads 	
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit ices • Italian ice • Sorbet • Gelatin • Coconut plant-based yogurt • Lactose-free ice cream or dairy-free ice cream 	
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee • Tea • Juice without added sugars 	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All spices and herbs 	

Foods to Avoid for a Lactose-Free Eating Plan

Food Group	Foods Not Recommended
Milk and dairy foods	Avoid all milk and dairy foods except those listed on the Recommended Foods chart.
Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs and nuts	Any prepared with ingredients that contain lactose
Grains	Any prepared with ingredients that contain lactose
Vegetables	Any prepared with ingredients that contain lactose
Fruits	Any prepared with ingredients that contain lactose
Fats and oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter • Margarine • Cream cheese
Desserts and beverages	Any prepared with ingredients that contain lactose

*Information from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, GI Lactose Nutrition Therapy, Page 1-3.