

What can I do if I have lactose intolerance?

If you have lactose intolerance, you can make changes to what you eat and drink. Some people may only need to have less lactose. Others may need to avoid lactose altogether. Using products that contain lactase helps some people.

Eating, Diet, and Nutrition

Talk with your doctor about your dietary plan. A dietary plan can help you manage the symptoms of lactose intolerance and get enough nutrients. If you have a child with lactose intolerance, follow the diet plan that your child's doctor recommends.

Milk and milk products. You may be able to have milk and milk products without symptoms if you

- drink small amounts of milk—half a cup or less—at a time
- drink small amounts of milk with meals, such as having milk with cereal or having cheese with crackers
- add small amounts of milk and milk products to your diet a little at a time and see how you feel
- eat milk products that are easier for people with lactose intolerance to break down:
 - yogurt
 - hard cheeses such as cheddar and Swiss



Lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk and milk products. You can find lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk and milk products at the grocery store. These products are just as healthy for you as regular milk and milk products.

Lactase products. You can use lactase tablets and drops when you have milk and milk products. The lactase enzyme breaks down the lactose in food. Using lactase tablets or drops can help you prevent symptoms of lactose intolerance. Check with your doctor before using these products. Some people, such as young children and pregnant and breastfeeding women, may not be able to use these products.



Calcium and Vitamin D

If you are lactose intolerant, make sure you get enough calcium each day. Milk and milk products are the most common sources of calcium. Other foods that contain calcium include

- fish with soft bones, such as canned salmon or sardines
- broccoli and other leafy green vegetables
- oranges
- almonds, Brazil nuts, and dried beans
- tofu
- products with the label showing added calcium, such as cereals, fruit juices, and soy milk

Vitamin D helps the body absorb and use calcium. Be sure to eat foods that contain vitamin D, such as eggs, liver, and certain kinds of fish, such as salmon. Also, being outside in the sunlight helps your body make vitamin D. Some companies add vitamin D to milk and milk products. If you are able to drink small amounts of milk or eat yogurt, choose those that have vitamin D added.

Talk with your doctor about how to get enough nutrients—including calcium and vitamin D—in your diet or your child’s diet. Ask if you should also take a **supplement** to get enough calcium and vitamin D.

For safety reasons, talk with your doctor before using dietary supplements or any other nonmainstream medicine together with or in place of the treatment your doctor prescribes. Read more at www.ods.od.nih.gov and www.nccam.nih.gov.

How will I know if a food or medicine has lactose?

Lactose is in many food products and in some medicines.

Food Products

Lactose is in milk and all foods made with milk, such as

- ice cream
- cream
- butter
- cheese

