

# Eating lactose free.

## Why have I been given this information sheet?

You have been given this information sheet to help you identify if the symptoms you are having may be due to intolerance to lactose.

## What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance means that you cannot digest lactose, the sugar found in milk and milk products. This may be because your body is not producing enough of an enzyme called lactase. If your body cannot digest lactose, the natural bacteria in your bowel will process (or ferment) it for you. This may cause symptoms of wind, stomach cramps, bloating and diarrhoea. If you are lactose intolerant these symptoms should get better once you are following a lactose free diet.

## How careful do I need to be?

Lactose intolerance is not the same as an allergy to cow's milk protein. With a milk allergy, all milk products must be strictly avoided, but with lactose intolerance you may be able to tolerate a small amount of lactose free milk products without any problem.

## Which foods contain lactose?

Lactose is the sugar present in milk and other dairy products, including soft cheese, yogurt and ice-cream; along with milky puddings such as custards and rice pudding. Lactose is also found in many convenience foods such as sauces, malted drinks, milk breads and ready-made meals. Foods containing any of the items in the list below should be avoided:

- **Milk**
- **Milk solids**
- **Milk powder**
- **Skimmed milk powder**
- **Cream (including artificial cream)**
- **Yoghurt**
- **Buttermilk**
- **Margarine**
- **Lactose**
- **Casein**
- **Whey powder**
- **Whey solids**

When you buy tinned, packet or other processed foods check the ingredients list for any of the ingredients listed above. They will be highlighted, often in bold type on the ingredients list. Statements that a food may be contaminated with common allergens (a food or other substance that may cause an allergic reaction) including cow's milk are often used on food packaging. However, these trace amounts of milk are very unlikely to cause any symptoms in lactose intolerance.

Manufacturers and supermarkets produce lists of their own brand products that are free from cow's milk or other allergens. These can be requested from customer services or downloaded from websites. These lists can help you identify which foods are suitable for a lactose free diet and make your diet more varied and nutritious.

### Are there any alternatives?

There are many foods that can be used as a substitute to cow's milk. These can provide variety to your meals and help you to get all the nutrients you require from your diet. These include:

<b>Dairy alternatives</b>	<b>Examples of product ranges</b>
<b>Lactose Free Dairy</b> (milks, yoghurts, cheeses, spreads)	Lactofree, Lactaid
<b>Soya</b> (milks, yoghurts, cream, ice cream, desserts and cheeses)	Alpro soya, Plamil, Provamel, Kallo, Swedish Glace
<b>Oat</b> (drinks and creams)	Oatly, Alpro, Provamel
<b>Rice</b> (drinks and ice creams)	Alpro, Rice Dream, Provamel
<b>Nut</b> (almond, hazelnut, cashew, coconut drinks, cheeses and desserts)	Alpro, KoKo, Kara, Provamel, Vegusto

### Calcium

Try to choose alternatives to milk and yoghurt that are fortified with calcium. Several milk alternatives contain as much calcium as you would find in cow's milk (120mg per 100mls). Try to have 3 portions of milk alternatives a day. If you are unable to manage this you may require a calcium supplement to meet your calcium needs.

## **Milk free products can be substituted in many recipes but the following tips may be helpful:**

- Soya milk may be palatable in tea, but is unsuitable to use in coffee as it may form lumps.
- For better results, grate hard alternative cheeses finely such as Lactofree cheese, Sheese® (soya cheese), or Vegusto (nut cheese).
- Use a microwave to cook foods such as custard and porridge made from lactose free alternatives rather than a saucepan, to prevent sticking.
- Try plain soya or coconut based yoghurts, coconut milk, Lactofree or oat cream as an alternative in curries, creamy sauces and dips. Use lactose free or alternative soft or spreading cheese ( Lactofree, Toffutti® or Sheese) or lactose free sour cream in dips, cheesecakes and other savoury and sweet sauces.

## **Can I ever eat foods containing lactose?**

Follow a lactose free diet for 4 weeks only. Even if your symptoms have resolved, you may be able to re-introduce some lactose containing foods. You may find you tolerate small amounts of lactose containing foods eaten throughout the day better than a larger amount eaten in one go. If you do tolerate them, try small amounts of other lactose containing foods, building up the amount until you reach the level that you can tolerate. If your symptoms return don't worry, they will go away when you return to the lactose free diet.

If you notice no change to your symptoms after 4 weeks on a lactose free diet, return to your normal diet and speak with your GP.

If you are struggling to follow this advice, or you avoid several other foods and are worried about ensuring you are getting enough nutrition in your diet, or you would like further information, please ask your GP to refer you to a dietitian.

## **Further information**

### **IBS Network**

Website: [www.theibsnetwork.org](http://www.theibsnetwork.org)

### **Allergy UK**

Website: [www.allergyuk.org/common-food-intolerances/dairy-intolerance](http://www.allergyuk.org/common-food-intolerances/dairy-intolerance)

### **Food Standards Agency**

Website: [www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/allergyintol/label/](http://www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/allergyintol/label/)

### **Vegan**

Website: [www.vegan.co.uk](http://www.vegan.co.uk)

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