

MILK ALLERGY OR LACTOSE INTOLERANCE IN ADULTS

What is the difference between milk allergy and lactose intolerance?

Food allergy and food intolerance are two different things. The main difference between the two is that a food allergy involves the body's immune system. An allergic reaction to food happens when the body's immune system decides a food component is harmful. Food allergens are often proteins in food. Intolerance to certain foods and food additives is a reaction by the body that does not involve the immune system. When people with a milk allergy have a milk product, the immune system reacts. The immune response can cause a variety of reactions in the body (see chart below).

An intolerance to lactose is caused by insufficient amounts of an enzyme called lactase, which is required to digest the milk sugar lactose. It is important that you go to your doctor for an accurate diagnosis of milk allergy or lactose intolerance.

| | Milk Allergy | Lactose Intolerance |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What are some common symptoms? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranges from hives, eczema, difficulty breathing, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhea, swelling of tongue, throat or stomach, and gas. • Severe cases can cause a life threatening reaction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nausea, cramps, bloating, gas and diarrhea. • Can not cause a life threatening reaction. |
| How often do symptoms occur after consuming milk products? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms can occur suddenly or be delayed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms usually develop 30 minutes to 2 hours after eating or drinking foods with lactose. |
| How is it diagnosed? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult a doctor or a doctor who specializes in the treatment of allergies, an allergist. • Requires a careful and detailed assessment of the problem. • The doctor may do allergy skin tests, blood tests, and may suggest the patient keep a food diary and record of what was eaten, when and the symptoms that were felt. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult a doctor. • Tests that may be used include the lactose tolerance test, hydrogen breath test and the stool acidity test. |

If you have a milk allergy

Avoid milk

The only way to treat a food allergy is to avoid the specific food(s) that trigger the allergy. You can substitute milk in baking with water or fruit juice in equal amounts (1 cup milk = 1 cup water).

Read food labels

Become familiar with technical or scientific names for milk protein. For example, milk protein can be listed as casein, sodium caseinate or milk solids. When in doubt consult a Registered Dietitian about that particular product. Watch for and avoid the following ingredients:

- all cheeses - lactose
- butter - milk
- buttermilk - milk solids
- calcium caseinate - potassium caseinate
- casein - sherbet
- cream - sodium caseinate

- ice cream - sour cream
- ice milk - whey
- lactoglobulin - yogurt

Ask about ingredients

When dining out, people suffering from a food allergy should ask about ingredients. Some hidden sources of milk may include:

- Many non-dairy products contain casein.
- Soy cheese-like products contain casein.
- Some meats may contain casein.
- Deli meat slicers are often used for both cheese and meat products.
- Some brands of canned tuna fish contain casein.
- Meat, poultry and fish served at restaurants often have butter added to it during the cooking process for extra flavour.

Note: If you have a true allergy to cow's milk, you will most likely not be able to consume goat's milk either.

If you have a diagnosed lactose intolerance

- Drink small amounts of milk at one time. Try 1/4 to 1/2 cup milk (50 to 125 mL) instead of 1 cup (250 mL).
- Drinking milk with meals may help reduce symptoms.
- Dairy products with lower lactose may be better tolerated depending on the severity of symptoms. You may need to avoid or eat less of the foods.

High lactose:

- milk, whole, 1% or 2%
- milk, skim, evaporated milk
- condensed milk, ice milk
- whipping cream, yogurt

Moderate lactose:

- Cheese: ricotta, feta, cottage- goat's milk
- cream
- ice cream

Low lactose:

- Cheese: cream, blue, brie cheese, cheddar, Parmesan, Wwiss
- buttermilk
- sour cream
- Jarlsberg
- butter

Lactose-free alternatives:

- soy beverages
- rice beverages
- lactaid
- Lacteeze yogurt
 - Lactose reduced milk and milk products are available at most grocery stores.
 - Lactase enzyme is available in liquid or tablet form at your pharmacy. Tablets are taken just before eating or drinking foods that contain lactose. Liquid lactase should be added to liquid milk products.

How to balance your nutrition

Milk products are a key source of vitamins and minerals in your diet, such as calcium and vitamin D. Calcium is vital for optimal bone growth and maintenance in all ages. Vitamin D is also essential to bone health and increases the absorption of calcium. A deficiency in calcium can cause bones to

become fragile and weak over time. This condition is known as osteoporosis. If you cannot drink milk or eat milk products, ask for information on increasing the amount of calcium and vitamin D in your diet.

How much calcium vitamin D do I need?

Recommended daily calcium and vitamin D intake:

| - | Calcium | Vitamin D |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|
| 9 to 18 years | 1300 mg | 200 IU |
| 19 to 50 years | 1000 mg | 200 IU |
| 51 to 70 years | 1200 mg | 400 IU |
| 71 years and older | 1200 mg | 600 IU |

Amounts for pregnant and breastfeeding are the same as age requirements.

It is important to try and meet all your needs for calcium and vitamin D through the foods you eat. If you are having trouble meeting your requirements, consult a doctor or Registered Dietitian. They can help you with your diet or can advise you on an appropriate supplement.

To get more information about vaccination, contact your family doctor or speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.

Source: Health Link Alberta Website, www.healthlinkalberta.ca

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