

Easy Ways to Tolerate Milk



For millions of people, drinking milk isn't so easy. People with lactose intolerance can't digest lactose (the sugar in milk), so they can't drink milk or eat milk products without suffering some or all of the following symptoms.

- Gas in the lower intestine.
- Abdominal pain and cramps.
- Bloating.
- Diarrhea.
- Nausea.

Intestinal distress may occur within minutes of consuming a food containing lactose and sometimes lasts for hours. The cause is a deficiency of lactase, the enzyme responsible for digesting lactose. The only "cure" for lactose intolerance is a milk-free diet. But because milk and milk products are important sources of calcium, avoiding these foods can deprive you of that essential mineral.

To have your milk and digest it, too, try these maneuvers.

- Learn which foods are the most difficult for you to digest and avoid them. Some people with lactose intolerance can tolerate certain dairy products if they eat small portions at a time.
- Read food labels carefully. Avoid products containing milk, milk solids, or whey solids. Items marked "parve" are milk free.
- Pretreat milk with the enzyme lactase, available over-the-counter in powder or capsule form as Lactaid. Added to milk 24 hours before you drink it, lactase predigests most of the lactose so you don't have to. Lactase tablets, taken as a digestive aid, are also available.
- Purchase Lactaid brand milk, ice cream, and cheese products, which have been treated with lactase, and are available in many supermarkets. Or use soy milks, yogurts, etc.