

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE (Milk Intolerance; Lactase Deficiency)

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

DESCRIPTION

Lactose intolerance is difficulty digesting cow's milk. Lactose is the primary sugar in milk. Lactose intolerance occurs with varying severity in 75% of the black population, 90% of Asians or American Indians, and less than 20% of Caucasians of northwest European origin. It is not contagious or cancerous.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Rumbling abdominal sounds, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, bloating, and occasionally, nausea following the ingestion of milk or other dairy products.

CAUSES

Lactose intolerance is caused by deficiency or absence of the enzyme lactase. Lactase is necessary to digest all milk except mother's milk. Without it, sugars in milk absorb fluid and cause diarrhea. Although some infants are born with the disorder, lactose intolerance usually develops in adulthood. Temporary lactose intolerance can occur after a severe bout of gastroenteritis that damages the intestinal lining.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Family history of lactase enzyme deficiency.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES Call the Wellness Center for more nutrition information at (618)536-4441.

Lactose intolerance cannot be prevented at present. Research suggests that most lactose-intolerant people can consume 12-15 grams (1 cup of milk) at one sitting with minimal symptoms. It has also been found that eating lactose-containing foods with other foods, especially those containing fat, delay the lactose from entering the colon in high concentrations.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

This condition is currently considered incurable. However, symptoms can be relieved or controlled. Symptoms may worsen at times for unexplained reasons.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Calcium deficiency (rare).

GENERAL MEASURES

Symptoms can be controlled by diet restrictions or use of lactase products. If you would like additional dietary information, contact the Wellness Center for an appointment with a nutritionist.

MEDICATION

A supplement to neutralize lactose in milk may be used. The enzyme lactase is available without a prescription to be added to milk and milk products, or products are available that have the enzyme added already. Calcium supplements may be added. When purchasing prescription or over-the-counter medication, check the label for lactose or milk products.

DIET

Persons with lactose intolerance should reduce or restrict milk and milk products, such as cheese and ice cream. Some patients tolerate whole milk or chocolate milk better than skim. Yogurt and fermented products such as hard cheese are better tolerated than milk. Read labels on food products. Milk sugar is used in many and may cause symptoms.

LACTOSE IN DAIRY FOODS

High Lactose	Moderate Lactose	Low Lactose
Milk	Yogurt	Hard Cheeses
Ice Cream	Cottage Cheese	

Since milk is the primary source of dietary calcium, it is important that other sources of calcium be consumed, such as salmon, greens, oranges, broccoli, bagels, tofu, black-eyed peas, almonds, whole wheat bread, peanuts or a calcium supplement.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF...

- You have symptoms of lactose intolerance.
- Temperature rises to 101°F or higher.
- A milk-free diet doesn't relieve symptoms.
- Nausea or vomiting occurs.
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Call the Wellness Center at (618)536-4441 for more nutrition information or an appointment with the nutritionist.

Student Health Center



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This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.