



Lactose Intolerance

What You Need to Know

Did you know that if you feel sick after drinking milk or eating foods made with milk, you may have lactose intolerance?

What is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance means you cannot digest foods with lactose in them. Lactose is the sugar found in milk and foods made with milk. Lactose intolerance is not serious, but it can make you very uncomfortable after you eat foods with lactose.

How will I feel if I have lactose intolerance?

After eating foods with lactose in them, you may feel sick to your stomach. You may also have cramps, bloating, gas, or diarrhea.

Some illnesses can cause these same problems. Your doctor can do tests to see if your problems are caused by lactose intolerance or by something else.

What can I do about lactose intolerance?

You will need to avoid or eat less of foods that have lactose in them.

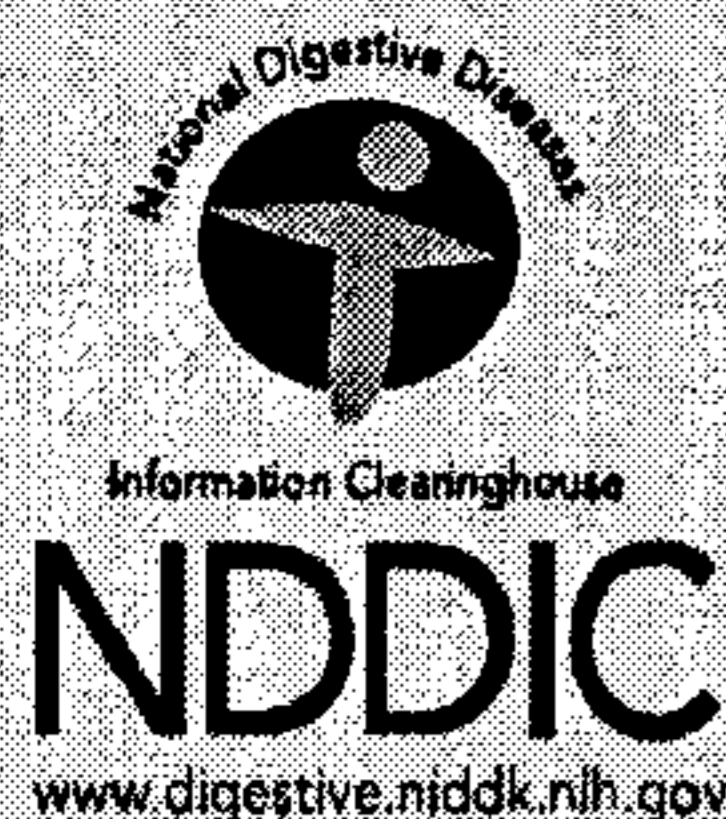
Lactose is in milk and all foods made with milk. It is also added to some boxed, canned, frozen, and other prepared foods, such as

- breads
- cereals
- lunch meats
- salad dressings
- mixes for cakes, cookies, pancakes, and biscuits
- frozen dinners

Learn to read food labels carefully. Look for milk and lactose in the list of ingredients. Also look for words like whey, curds, milk by-products, dried milk, milk solids, and powdered milk. If any of these words are listed on a label, the product contains lactose.

Do I have to avoid all foods with lactose?

Not necessarily. You may be able to eat a small amount of some foods with lactose. For example, you may be able to eat cheese or yogurt but not drink milk. Try a small amount of the food and then see how you feel. You can also drink lactose-reduced milk. And you can buy lactase enzyme caplets or drops that help you digest lactose.





Where can I get more information about lactose intolerance?

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse

2 Information Way

Bethesda, MD 20892-3570

Phone: 1-800-891-5389

Fax: 703-738-4929

Email: nddic@info.niddk.nih.gov

Internet: www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov

The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The NIDDK is part of the National Institutes of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This publication is not copyrighted. The Clearinghouse encourages people to duplicate and distribute as many copies as desired.



The NIDDK Awareness and Prevention Series
Materials for Community Health Fairs



The NIDDK Awareness and Prevention Series is designed to make you ask yourself, "Could this be me or someone I care for?" So take a closer look. Additional information on this topic and other titles in the series is available through the National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse or on the Internet at www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health

NIH Publication No. 07-6187
June 2007