



Internally Yours[®]

A Publication
of Atlanta South
Gastroenterology, P.C.

www.AtlantaSouthGastro.com

www.EndoAtlas.com

The *low lactose* Diet

Milk and other dairy products contain a sugar called **lactose**, which is often called the “milk sugar.” As milk is digested in the small intestine, an enzyme called **lactase** splits the lactose into two smaller sugars, glucose and galactose. This enzyme is normally made by the small intestine.

If lactase is not present in sufficient amounts, or if it is missing altogether, then the lactose will not be digested, and it will pass through the small intestine and into the colon. Bacteria in the colon will digest the lactose, creating gas and water. The inability to digest lactose therefore results in excessive water in the colon and increased amounts of colonic gas. The corresponding symptoms are bloating, excess gas, abdominal cramping and pain, diarrhea, and occasionally nausea and vomiting.

Lactose intolerance occurs in varying degrees of severity. Thus, many persons who do not tolerate large amount of dairy products can eat them in small amounts with minimal or no symptoms.

Symptomatic lactose intolerance may be treated either by reducing the dietary content of lactose, or by adding lactase to food before it is eaten. Complete avoidance of all dairy products is not always necessary. Dairy products such as aged cheese, and unpasteurized yogurt with active Lactobacillus cultures, are relatively low in lactose content and are often well-tolerated. Milk which has been pretreated with lactase is available in most large grocery stores. Lactase preparations are available in pharmacies, and these may be used to pretreat foods.

Individuals who reduce their intake of dairy products must take care to include other foods which are alternate sources of calcium. Such foods include green leafy vegetables, salmon with bones, almonds, molasses, legumes (especially soybeans), dried fruits and sardines. Tums and Roloids antacids are another good source of calcium.

GUIDELINES TO FOOD SELECTIONS

Very Low-Lactose Foods

Dairy: soy milk, non-dairy creamers; non-dairy whipped toppings, unpasteurized yogurt with active cultures, aged cheese (parmesan, romano, swiss, provolone, edam, bleu, colby, cheddar, limberger, gouda, camembert); butter in small amounts (less than 2 tsp. per day); margarine

Breads and Cereals: essentially all; avoid any prepared with milk or cream

Vegetables, Fruits, Nuts, Meats: all

Relatively Low-Lactose Foods

Dairy: buttermilk, yogurt, butter, milk treated with lactase

Foods to Avoid

Dairy: milk (whole, low-fat, 2%, 1%, skim), chocolate milk, processed cheese and spreads, cream cheese, ricotta, mozzarella, cottage cheese, ice cream, ice milok, sour cream, custards, cream pies, cakes, sherbet, cream or chocolate candy

Breads: French toast, pancakes, biscuits and others prepared with milk

Others: other foods prepared with milk, for example white sauces, creamed soups, salad dressing with milk or cream, dietetic fruits and candy that contain lactose