LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

WHAT IS LACTOSE INTOLERANCE?

Lactose intolerance is a condition where the body is not able to digest lactose properly. Lactose is the milk sugar found in milk, yoghurt, cheese and ice cream. It is the most common form of lactose intolerance.

CAUSES OF LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

In order to digest lactose, we need an enzyme called lactase, which specifically breaks down lactose into two sugars: glucose and galactose. In people with lactose intolerance, there is a reduction in the amount of lactase, which means that lactose is not broken down properly.

Symptoms of lactose intolerance can vary, from feeling a sensation of bloating, flatulence, stomach cramps and diarrhoea to more severe symptoms such as anaphylaxis (i.e. collapse).

Lactose intolerance is most common in Asian, African, Native American, Middle Eastern and Pacific peoples. In the UK, only 5% of the overall population is thought to suffer from lactose intolerance; however, this figure varies within different ethnic groups.

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Lactase levels in the body naturally decline as we get older but we can still digest lactose, even if it is not as efficient. Lactase deficiency is associated with most forms of lactose intolerance.

HOW COMMON IS IT?

It is very probable that some people are naturally unable to digest milk, but it is rare for someone to suffer from lactose intolerance so severely that they cannot consume any dairy products.

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Current tests for lactose intolerance require people to consume the same amount of lactose as that normally consumed, over 2 hours.

Determine if you have lactose intolerance using current methods. This means some people who could tolerate dairy products containing lactose may experience symptoms due to the live bacteria in fermented milk products.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF LACTOSE INTOLERANCE?

Lactose intolerance can present itself in a number of different ways. Symptoms can range from being mild to severe. These symptoms can vary and can include:

- Flatulence (wind)
- Diarrhoea or loose stools
- Stomach cramps.
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Gas and bloating
- Bloating
- Joint pain
- Lethargy
- Dizziness

In about 10% of cases, people experience such mild symptoms that they are not aware they have lactose intolerance. In these cases, symptoms may not be noticeable in all individuals, and may only occur in some people who have lactose intolerance.

Many everyday foods contain lactose, so it is important to be aware of which foods contain lactose. This can help to reduce the amount of lactose that you consume.

If you believe you may have lactose intolerance, it is important to know that it can be confirmed by a reliable diagnosis. A separate leafl et from The Dairy Council is available from The Dairy Council.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED PREVALENCE?

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The symptoms of lactose intolerance can vary greatly, from mild to severe. Some people may only experience symptoms such as bloating, flatulence and loose stools, while others may experience more severe symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

According to a study published in the journal Pediatrics, about 13% of the world’s population is estimated to have lactose intolerance. This estimate is based on self-reported symptoms of lactose intolerance and the results of a lactose tolerance test.

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WHAT FOODS ARE SUITABLE FOR A LOW-LACTOSE DIET?

Many people with lactose intolerance can safely consume normal milk and dairy products, providing they are eaten in small amounts and spread throughout the day. Some people may find that they can tolerate small amounts of dairy products, but may not be able to tolerate larger amounts.

There are a number of fermented milk products that are more tolerated than whole cow’s milk, which have been suggested to help to break down lactose in the gut. These include yogurt, kefir and buttermilk. However, these may not be suitable for people with lactose intolerance. Soya milk and rice milk can also be used as alternatives.

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We’re often asked if non-fermented dairy foods such as Cheddar, Emmental, Edam, Parmesan and Colby cheese are suitable.

Suitable cheeses include: Cheddar, Emmental, Edam, Parmesan and Colby cheese.

Fermented dairy products such as yogurt, kefir and buttermilk are more easily absorbed into the body than from other foods. This is because the calcium in dairy foods is more easily absorbed into the body than from other foods.

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The easiest ways to do so is to eat three portions of dairy foods.

In order to meet our calcium requirements, one of the options is to eat three portions of dairy foods. In addition, other sources of calcium include:
-Certain foods such as fortified cereals and soymilk.
-Seafood, particularly sardines.
-Certain types of dairy foods, such as calcium-fortified dairy products.

Other sources of calcium include:
-Leafy green vegetables, such as broccoli and spinach.
-Calcium-fortified plant-based beverages, such as milk.

Not all dairy foods are equal when it comes to calcium content. For example, certain types of dairy foods, such as aged cheeses, contain higher levels of calcium than others, such as butter. Additionally, some dairy products, such as yogurt and kefir, contain live cultures that can help improve calcium absorption.

Where can I get more dietary advice?

To ensure that you are meeting your calcium needs and avoiding any nutritional imbalances, it is important to consult with a registered dietitian. The British Dietetic Association offers a range of services, including one-to-one dietary advice and group workshops.

Can I have lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance is a condition that affects approximately 1 in 10 of the population. It occurs when the body is unable to produce enough lactase, the enzyme responsible for breaking down lactose. Symptoms of lactose intolerance can include abdominal pain, bloating, and diarrhea.

How can I determine if I have lactose intolerance?

There are several tests available to determine if you have lactose intolerance. These include:
-Oral lactose tolerance test
-1-galactose breath test
-Intestinal biopsy

In the United Kingdom, the National Diet and Nutrition Survey: adults aged 19-64 years is a source of information on dietary intake and nutritional status. The survey provides a comprehensive picture of the diet of the UK population and is used by various organizations to inform policy and practice.