

# Lactose Intolerance & Your Child

*As a parent, you try your best to keep your children healthy, which isn't always easy. Today, with new information about lactose intolerance, making sure your child is getting adequate nutrition during his or her growing years is easier than ever.*

It's helpful to know that lactose intolerance is less common in young children than adults, even in minority populations. And, studies show that people who have trouble digesting lactose can usually still enjoy dairy foods.<sup>1</sup> This is good news for you and your child! For children, the important benefits of calcium and vitamin D have long been recognized. Naturally calcium-rich milk, both regular and lactose-free, fortified with vitamin D is one of the most readily accessible sources of these bone-building nutrients.<sup>1</sup>

## Q What is lactose intolerance?

**A** Lactose intolerance is one type of food sensitivity. People who are lactose intolerant don't have enough *lactase*, the enzyme that breaks down the natural sugar found in milk, lactose.

Most children with lactase deficiency do not experience symptoms until late-adolescence or adulthood.

Symptoms of intolerance may include gas, bloating, stomach cramps and diarrhea. If your young child is experiencing symptoms, there may be an underlying medical cause, so it is important to visit your doctor.

## Q How do I know if my child is lactose intolerant?

**A** If you *suspect* your child has lactose intolerance, discuss it with his/her doctor. If the diagnosis is lactose intolerance, your child will most likely still be able to consume dairy products, which are important for bone health and overall growth. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends children with lactose intolerance still consume dairy foods in order to get calcium, vitamin D, protein and other nutrients essential for bone health and overall growth.<sup>3</sup> Choose low-fat and fat-free dairy first.

**According to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, "Moderate evidence shows that the intake of milk and milk products is linked to improved bone health, especially in children and adolescents."<sup>2</sup>**



**NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL®**

## Q Can my child still consume dairy foods if he or she is lactose intolerant?

**A Most likely, yes!**

Try these tips to help your child continue to enjoy low-fat and fat-free dairy foods:

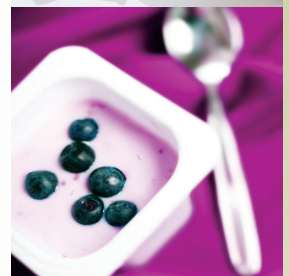
**Sip it and pair it.** Serve your child a small amount of milk at a time. You could even try using milk to make a tasty fruit smoothie! Or, pair milk with solid foods to help slow digestion and allow the body more time to digest lactose. Try the classic combination of milk and cereal.

**Cheese (and calcium) please.** Most cheeses are lower in lactose making them easier to digest. Natural cheeses are low in lactose. Try Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Monterey Jack, and Mozzarella.

**Yummy options.** Chocolate milk has the same nutrients as white milk and there are tasty lactose-free options. Yogurt and Greek-style yogurt are also delicious and nutritious choices, and those that contain live and active cultures help to digest lactose.

**Try something new.** Offer lactose-free milk and milk products to your child. They are real milk products, just without the lactose. They provide the same nutrients as regular dairy foods and taste great!

**Choose wisely away from home.** Your child spends a lot of time at school, and the school cafeteria offers many opportunities to implement the tips listed above. Encourage your child to choose lactose-free milk or chocolate milk with breakfast (if available) and lunch and to look for menu items that include cheese and yogurt. Schools have the option to offer lactose-free and reduced-lactose milk (fat-free and/or low-fat) as part of school meals.<sup>4</sup> Talk to your school cafeteria staff about special dietary requests for your child.



Reviewed by the:

American Academy  
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

**eat right.** Academy of Nutrition  
and Dietetics



**NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL®**

<sup>1</sup> National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Conference Statement. NIH Consensus Development Conference: Lactose Intolerance and Health. February 22-24, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 7th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2011. p 38.

<sup>3</sup> Heyman MB for the Committee on Nutrition, American Academy of Pediatrics. From the American Academy of Pediatrics: Lactose intolerance in infants, children, and adolescents. *Peds.* 2006; 118: 1279-1286.

<sup>4</sup> Federal Register. Rules and Regulations. 2012; 77(17): 4095.