

## 5 Smart Ways to Enjoy Dairy if Lactose is a Concern

The natural sugar in dairy foods - lactose - may be difficult for some people to digest completely. Guidelines released by a 2010 National Institutes of Health panel on Lactose Intolerance stressed the nutritional importance of dairy foods, especially for bone health, and outlined ways to still enjoy three daily servings.

### 1. Drink low-fat/fat-free milk with a meal or snack.

Research suggests that even people with lactose intolerance or maldigestion can enjoy the amount of lactose in a cup of milk with no - or minor - symptoms. The solid foods in a meal slow digestion and give the body more time to breakdown the lactose. For many, this eliminates or reduces any symptoms or discomfort from drinking milk.

### 2. Introduce dairy gradually in smaller portions.

Many people self-diagnose their symptoms as lactose intolerance when dairy really isn't the problem. Discuss digestive issues with your doctor - and check out how your body handles smaller amounts of milk ( $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup) at a time. You may discover that milk wasn't the problem at all - or find out how much you can tolerate at a time.

### 3. Try lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk.

Enjoy a refreshing glass of milk with the *lactose-free* or *lactose-reduced* varieties found in your dairy case. The good news is that these products contain all the key nutrients found in any milk, including protein, calcium, vitamin D, potassium, and many others. Lactase, the enzyme that breaks down lactose, is also sold in pill and drop forms.

### 4. Get a little "culture" along with your dairy.

Some dairy foods are made with "friendly" bacteria that help digest lactose in your intestine. Fermented dairy foods made with these cultures include regular yogurts and drinkable yogurts (read label to make sure it says live, active cultures), cultured buttermilk, and traditional drinks like kefir (popular in Europe and the Middle East).

### 5. Enjoy hard, aged cheese.

When milk is made into cheese, most of the lactose is removed. Hard, aged cheeses are naturally low in lactose, so older really is wiser in this case! You can enjoy small servings (1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  oz.) of Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, and provolone cheese as a snack - or in dishes such as pasta entrées, Mexican food, sandwiches, and salads.