

## INFANTS

*Babies are generally more vulnerable to food chemicals because their metabolism, gastrointestinal and nervous systems are immature, which is why they often prefer bland foods to begin with.*

As children mature, their bodies become accustomed to handling small amounts of rich, spicy and highly flavoured foods, which usually only cause ill effects if eaten in excess.



*Sensitive babies with a susceptibility to food intolerance can have reactions even when exclusively breast fed. This is due to chemicals from the mother's diet getting into the breast milk and causing colicky irritable behaviour, loose stools, eczema and nappy (diaper) rashes. If the MOTHER goes onto an elimination diet, baby's symptoms will generally settle rapidly.*

## LACTOSE

*LACTOSE is the natural sugar present in all mammalian milk, including human breast milk. It is a compound sugar made up of glucose and galactose, and cannot be absorbed until it has been digested by the enzyme LACTASE in the lining of the small bowel.*

Almost all infants produce normal amounts of lactase enzyme. Levels are maintained for life in people of Northern European background, but in other ethnic groups (Aboriginal, African, Asian, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern), levels fade during childhood. Temporary lactase deficiency can occur in infants from damage to the small bowel lining following infection, non-allergenic protein intolerance or food allergy.

**LACTOSE INTOLERANCE** is the term used when people develop symptoms due to difficulty digesting lactose. Incompletely digested lactose is fermented by bacteria in the large bowel and can cause abdominal discomfort, bloating, excessive wind and diarrhoea. Symptoms can develop an hour or two after ingesting lactose and are usually mild.

Many people with lactose intolerance can have small amounts of milk or yoghurt, although a sudden illness or change of diet can cause a loss of tolerance.



*NOTE: If you react to cheese (which contains no lactose) chocolates, biscuits or cake you're likely to have intolerance to food chemicals other than lactose. See chart showing the lactose content of some common foods on page 80.*