



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.

LACTOSE CONTENT of some common foods

	FOODS	SERVING SIZE	LACTOSE (mg)
May cause symptoms 	Cow's milk	1 cup	12g
	Goat's milk	1 cup	10g
	Yoghurt (plain)	1/2 cup	10g
	Breast milk	1 feed	5-10g
	Ice-confection	2 scoops	5g
	Ice-cream	2 scoops	5g
Usually tolerated     	Quiche	1 slice	2g
	Lasagne	1 serve	1g
	Custard tart	1 tart	1g
	Cottage cheese	1/2 cup	1g
	Cream	2 tbsp	1g
	Cream cheese	1 tbsp	1g
	White milk bread	2 slices	0.5g
	Plain or chocolate cake	1 slice	negligible
	Fruit cake	1 slice	negligible
	Plain or fruit bun	1	negligible
	Chocolate	4 squares	negligible
	Biscuits: plain sweet	2	negligible
	Biscuits: cream-filled	1	negligible
	Butter	1 tsp	negligible
	Margarine	1 tsp	negligible
No problem   	Soy drinks	1 cup	negligible
	Bread: white/wholemeal	2 slices	negligible
	Muesli bar	1	negligible
	Cheese: cheddar, edam, gouda, Swiss	1 slice	negligible
	Cocoa	1 tsp	negligible