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Sweet Options For Lactose Intolerants

● By Lisa Drayer, MA, RD

Jul 12, 2004 5:00 am US/Eastern

NEW YORK (CBS) Foods like chocolate and ice cream are often forbidden not only for those looking to lose weight, but for the 30 million Americans who are lactose intolerant.

These days, however, there are sweet options for individuals hoping to enjoy their ice cream and digest it too.

With a variety of low lactose products on the market and health experts promoting eating behaviors to help aid in the digestion of lactose, intolerance of this milk sugar does not have to get in the way of enjoying one's favorite foods – or meeting necessary calcium and vitamin D requirements from dairy foods.

“Lactose intolerance is a very common condition that can easily be managed with just a little education, understanding, and solutions found in the dairy case or in the OTC aisle,” says Dr. Steven Peikin, Head of Gastroenterology at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Jersey and author of *Gastrointestinal Health*. The condition affects 80% of Asian Americans, 75% of African Americans, and 50% of Hispanics, according to the American Dietetic Association.

Taking a Simple Test for Lactose Intolerance

Symptoms of lactose intolerance can occur when lactose is not sufficiently digested or absorbed, and include bloating, cramping, gas, and loose stools. Since there may be other conditions causing these symptoms, however, you can take a simple test to determine if you are lactose intolerant:

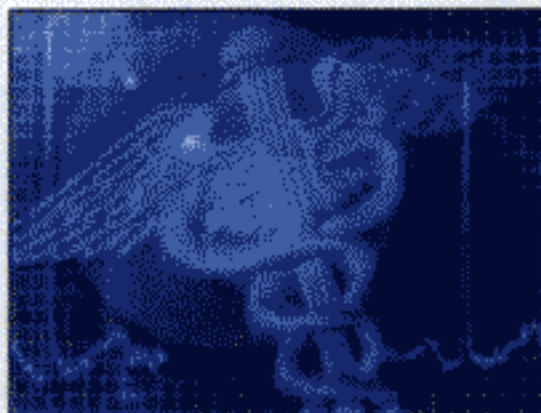
Drink 12 ounces of milk, and then wait to see if symptoms develop. If you experience symptoms, try the same amount of lactose-free milk or soy milk on the next day, and see if symptoms re-occur. If they don't, you probably have lactose intolerance.

Diet Advice for Lactose Intolerance

According to Dr. Dennis Savaiano at Purdue University, if you are lactose intolerant, you can train your body (specifically the large intestine) to tolerate lactose-containing foods. It is important, however, to combine dairy with other foods, and limit your portion sizes. Research from Purdue and Minnesota has revealed that individuals who do this eventually experience fewer symptoms from lactose-containing foods. The adaptation occurs in 5-10 days, says Savaiano.

Below, some additional dietary options for those who are lactose intolerant.

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1. Lactose free dairy products including Lactaid milk and lactose free ice creams (Scoopfuls, made by Lactaid, Toffuti Cutie sandwiches, and Smoochies Lite and Creamy are all lactose-free). Soy milk is a good option as well, however, some soy milks are not fortified with calcium. Be sure to check labels.

2. Low lactose dairy foods including yogurts with live active cultures (these bacteria help to digest lactose) and low lactose cheeses, including Brie, Cheddar, Swiss, Blue Cheese, and Cream cheese.

If you are lactose intolerant but love chocolate, you may be able to enjoy it in moderation. A recent study published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* revealed that individuals with lactose intolerance did not experience symptoms from lactose present in milk chocolate.

3. Lactaid enzyme supplements are available to take with dairy food. Options include Lactaid Ultra, Lactaid Chewables, Extra Strength, and Original. You can take one of these supplements with your first bite of dairy. Visit Lactaid.com for more information.

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