

Lactose intolerance

Compiled by: Cerballiance Editorial Board

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE IN A FEW WORDS

Lactose is a sugar primarily found in milk. Our bodies possess an enzyme called lactase, which is responsible for breaking down this sugar. However, individuals with lactose intolerance experience a reduced activity or absence of this enzyme. As a result, lactose is not properly digested, leading to varying degrees of digestive issues such as bloating, flatulence, intestinal cramps, and diarrhea.



- These symptoms typically manifest within minutes to hours after consuming lactose. The only effective treatment for lactose intolerance is the complete removal of lactose from the diet.

WHAT IS LACTOSE ?

- Lactose is a sugar. It is the main sugar present in milk and is only found in milk or its derived products.
- Our body has an enzyme, lactase, to break down lactose and thus allow its digestion.
- Lactose is present in all dairy products: milk, yoghurt, butter, cheese... But also in all products and dishes prepared from its ingredients (sauces, pastries for example).

WHAT IS LACTOSE INTOLERANCE ?

In the early ages of life, lactose plays an indispensable nutritional role and rarely poses a problem. However, over time, the activity of the enzyme responsible for breaking down lactose may decrease.

Individuals with lactose intolerance experience a reduced production or complete absence of lactase, the enzyme responsible for breaking down lactose. Consequently, when lactose is consumed, it cannot be fully digested. Instead, it undergoes fermentation by intestinal bacteria, leading to the onset of digestive symptoms.

Lactose intolerance can either be acquired or present from birth. In some cases, it may be a result of other digestive disorders, such as celiac disease, Crohn's disease, or gastroenteritis. These conditions can contribute to the development of lactose intolerance alongside their primary symptoms.



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS ?

They are mainly digestive: bloating, flatulence, intestinal cramps, and diarrhea. These symptoms appear within minutes to hours after ingesting lactose-containing products. However, there are varying degrees of severity of lactose intolerance depending on the amount of lactase produced by the body. Intolerance should not be confused with the rarer and more severe cow's milk protein allergy. It appears earlier and causes more important symptoms: digestive disorders, respiratory and dermatological disorders.

WHAT SYMPTOMS?

INTESTINAL CRAMPS

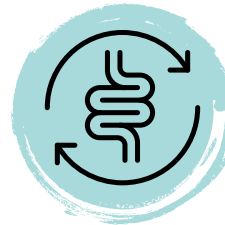


WATCH OUT
FOR THESE
SIGNS.

BLOATING



DIGESTION



FLATULENCE



WHAT TREATMENTS?

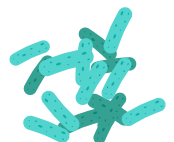
There is currently no known treatment. The only way to reduce symptoms is to eliminate lactose from one's diet, which is referred to as dietary exclusion. However, complete exclusion is not mandatory and depends on each individual and their tolerance level.

- Taking tablets or powders containing lactase can also be helpful. By supplementing the body's lactase levels, it enables individuals to avoid complete exclusion and have more dietary flexibility.

LABORATORY TESTS

Other tests can be performed:

- Lactose tolerance test: after ingestion of a certain amount of lactose, the amount of glucose in the blood (blood glucose) is measured by a blood test.
- Breath Hydrogen Test: measures the amount of hydrogen exhaled by the patient after lactose ingestion. This is because exhaled hydrogen reflects the amount of lactose not digested by the intestine. The higher the hydrogen level, the less efficient is the digestion of lactose.



REFERENCES

Source

<https://www.cerballiance.fr/fr/blog/prevention-nutrition/intolerance-au-lactose>