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Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at Bouchard Insurance.

Lactose Intolerance

Discover ways to enjoy dairy without the side effects

Lactose intolerance (also known as lactase deficiency) means that the body is unable to digest milk sugar (lactose) found in dairy products. Though this is not a dangerous condition, the symptoms associated with it are extremely uncomfortable and can make dining a challenge.

Those who are lactose intolerant lack the enzyme lactase which is produced in the lining of the small intestine. Lactase breaks down lactose for absorption in the bloodstream. This condition is not the same as a food allergy because it does not concern the immune system. In fact, people can control symptoms related to lactose intolerance through diet modifications.

Who's At Risk?

- *Age* – Starts in adolescence and early adulthood
- *Ethnicity* – Most commonly affects African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American populations
- *Premature Birth* – Babies born prematurely may have lower levels of lactase because this enzyme increases later in the third trimester

Symptoms

- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Abdominal Cramps

- Bloating
- Gas

Symptoms correlate to the individual's age, ethnicity and how fast food is digested. In addition, lactose intolerance cannot be diagnosed simply by the symptoms alone, as they can also be indicators of stomach flu or irritable bowel syndrome. Also, diarrhea in young children could be an indicator of a milk protein allergy.

To determine whether you are lactose intolerant, visit your doctor and explain your symptoms. He or she will then confirm your condition with one of three different tests.

Solutions

Though it is not possible to improve the way the body produces lactase, there are ways to control symptoms and still enjoy some dairy products. Try gradually introducing lactose products into your diet to figure out which ones cause symptoms. For instance, milk alone may give you diarrhea but eating ice cream may result in no symptoms at all. Also try these solutions to reduce

symptoms:

- Drink milk in small quantities more frequently.
- Drink milk while also eating other foods to slow the digestive process.
- Consume lactose-reduced or lactose-free products.
- Look for hidden lactose found in cereal, instant soups, baking mixes and salad dressing.
 - Check labels for ingredients such as whey, nonfat dry milk powder, malted milk, buttermilk and dry milk solids.
 - Ask your pharmacist if there is lactose in any medications you are taking.
- Eat foods rich in calcium such as leafy greens, almonds, tofu and broccoli to replace the calcium you are missing from not consuming dairy.



Did You Know...?

There are lactase enzyme tablets available that break down lactose to help the body digest. You can simply add them directly to dairy products or take tablets before a meal.