

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

Lactose intolerance is the inability to digest lactose, a sugar found in milk and other dairy products. The problem is caused by a deficient production of the enzyme lactase. It is common for lactose intolerance to run in families, and it frequently occurs temporarily after bouts of severe diarrhea. Persons of African, Asian and Mediterranean descent are more likely to have lactose intolerance.

Symptoms *may* include:

- Diarrhea
- Bloating, gas, abdominal cramps or vomiting after ingesting milk or dairy products
- Poor growth and weight gain in children
- Watery diarrhea in infants

What *your doctor* can do:

- Diagnose lactose intolerance by asking about your symptoms, performing a physical exam, and ordering or performing a breath hydrogen test.
- Order laboratory tests of the stool of infants and young children.

What *you* can do:

- Modify your eating habits in order to avoid having symptoms.
- Consume milk products in small amounts, or avoid completely.
- Substitute rice or soymilk for cow's milk.
- Check ingredients of processed foods for lactose.
- Try cheeses or yogurt. These foods sometimes do not cause problems.
- Ask your doctor about taking enzyme supplements or lactase-containing foods.

What *you* can expect:

This usually is a permanent condition that requires life-long treatment.

Contact your doctor if symptoms do not improve or worsen; or if your baby is not taking formula or food, or is not gaining weight.