

Lactose intolerance

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



An inability to digest lactose and foods containing it is called lactose intolerance (milk intolerance, lactase deficiency or dairy product intolerance).

Lactose is the main sugar of Milk and milk products. An enzyme called lactase is found in the interstitial cells of small intestine. Lactase acts on lactose to break down it into simpler forms, glucose and galactose. In simpler forms sugar is easily absorbed from the walls of intestine into the blood arteries. This disease is caused due to the abnormal functioning of digestive system.

Due to the deficiency of the enzyme lactase, lactose remains indigestible and hence a person may suffer a discomfort after ingesting milk or dairy product, swelling in the stomach, mild to severe diarrhea, nausea, cramps, or gas problem and bloating. Symptoms may appear immediately or any time after 2 hrs of ingestion of milk or dairy products. Tolerance in a person depends on physiological factors

In primary lactase deficiency lactase is produced in too small amount that the person is unaware of this deficiency till he reaches an older age.

Secondary lactase deficiency results from injury to the small intestine done due to some other diseases like Crohn's diseases and inflammatory bowel diseases. Primary lactase deficiency is found to be linked to genetic malfunctioning.

Different tests are used by the doctor to identify this deficiency. For example, stool acidity test, hydrogen breath test and lactose tolerance test.

There is no specific treatment for this disease. However, symptoms can be monitored and controlled by providing preventive diet. A specific diet lacking lactose is given to the patient in order to avoid occurrence of the symptoms. Using certain medicines and drops for the digestion of lactose helps a lot. The patient may start calcium supplements as an alternative for dairy products.

References

1. <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/lactoseintolerance/>