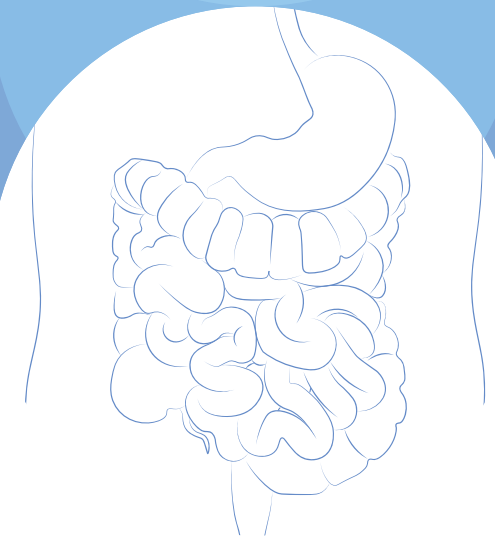




Lactose intolerance

GASTROENTEROLOGY

Disease pattern

Lactose intolerance is a type of food intolerance; however, it is not an allergy. It is a consequence of lack of lactase, which is an enzyme that digests the natural sugar in milk such as lactose. The amount of lactase within an organism is genetically determined.

People with low level of lactase may experience lactose intolerance symptoms such as flatulence, bloating, or diarrhoea. The severity of symptoms is gradually and depends on the deficiency of produced lactase. Intolerance symptoms occur if more lactose is ingested than the system can process at once.

People diagnosed with lactose intolerance continue to produce lactase at low level and are able to digest some lactose. Most are able to enjoy a glass of milk without any problems.

Lactose intolerance may also be temporary, due to certain medications or illnesses, such as the flu.

Only a few persons with lactose intolerance also develop intolerance symptoms just by consuming dairy foods.

Testing, diagnosis, and treatment options

A professional specialist should be consulted in case of suspected lactose intolerance. Self-diagnosis is unreliable, as the symptoms may be caused by other diseases.

THE LACTOSE ABSORPTION TEST

The lactose-tolerance test measures the body's reaction to a lactose boost. Two hours after soberly drinking a defined amount of lactose, a blood sample is taken to measure the blood sugar level (glucose level). If glucose concentration does not increase, it indicates that the body is not digesting and absorbing the lactose-filled drink properly and completely.

LACTOSE BREATH TEST (HZ TEST)

This test also requires to soberly drink a liquid with a high lactose content. The concentration of hydrogen in breath air is measured at regular intervals. Usually, only very little hydrogen is detectable. However, if the body fails to digest lactose, it will be fermented in the large intestine and releases hydrogen and other gases that ultimately be exhaled. Increased amounts of hydrogen in breathing air indicate that the lactose is not completely digested and absorbed.

STOOL-ACID-TEST

For infants and children who are unable to perform breathing or other tests, a stool-acid test can be applied. Lactic acid and other acids arise in intestine from undigested lactose and can be measured in stool sample.

TREATMENTS

Currently, there is no way to boost the human body's production of lactase. However, ailment due to lactose intolerance can be reduced to a minimum by orally supplement lactase. (Refer to the relevant suggestions in the conclusion)

SPECIALISTS

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines state that milk alternatives within the dairy food group, such as yogurt and lactose-free milk, are the most reliable and simplest way to relieve ailments associated with lactose intolerance..

DHHS/USDA, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005. 6th Edition.

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According to the National Medical Association's 2004 consensus report, the general population should consume three to four daily servings of low-fat milk formula to reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Lactose-free milk is an alternative option for those who experience difficulties with digesting dairy products.

Wooten, WJ and Price, W. The role of dairy and dairy nutrients in the diet of African Americans. JNMA, 96 (12) Supplement, 2004.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children with lactose intolerance continue to consume dairy products to obtain sufficient calcium, vitamin D, protein, and other nutrients, which are important for bone health and general development.

American Academy of Pediatrics, Lactose intolerance in infants, children, and adolescents. Pediatrics. 2006; 118 (3):1279-1286. Ausgabe 001/ 2020

Conclusion

Lactose intolerance is a nutritional intolerance not a food allergy.

Milk, cheese, and yogurts are important sources of essential nutrients, they provide calcium and potassium, phosphorus, protein, vitamins A, and B12, riboflavin, as well as niacin. Milk and certain types of yogurt also provide vitamin D, which helps to absorb calcium.

Suggestions

Lactose intolerance is easily controlled in most cases. The following suggestions can assist to keep symptoms at a low level:

Start small and increase

Consume small portions of milk and dairy products. This enables the residual lactase of the body to fulfil its task of digest lactose before problems occur.

Gradually increase the portions

If symptoms arise after consumption of increasing portion of lactose containing food, this may indicate that the endogenous lactase is exceeded. The amount of food which is tolerated without ailments should be individually determined.

Combining the dairy products

Milk may be taken together with other foods, however, not on an empty stomach. Solid food slows down digestion and helps to digest and prevents symptoms.

«Older is wiser»

This applies to cheese. Most of the lactose is removed during processing of milk into cheese. The lactose content is particularly low in matured hard cheeses, such as Appenzeller, Gruyère, Emmentaler, or Parmesan.

Absorbing a little "culture"

Dairy products with live, active bacteria (such as yogurt) may help to digest lactose.

Reduction of the amount and support

Reduce consumption of dairy products and replace it by lactose-free milk. It contains all the nutrients of ordinary milk.

Lactase enzyme pills, which are available in pharmacies, can provide additional support. Prior to the first consumption of dairy products, they can help to digest lactose more easily.

Consult an expert

These suggestions may possibly not apply to everyone. Counselling by a healthcare professional and a gastroenterologist is recommended.