

Lactose Intolerance

In babies and children

Lactose intolerance advice

Lactose is a natural milk sugar found in breast milk, cow's milk and goat's milk. Lactose is the main source of energy for growing babies.

Lactose is two sugars; glucose and galactose.

In the gut, the enzyme lactase breaks down lactose. Lactose intolerance happens when there is not enough lactase to do this.

Signs of lactose intolerance

Bloating, stomach upsets and loose poos after having foods containing lactose.

Some babies are born unable to break down lactose but this is uncommon.

Some babies and children can become lactose intolerant after an illness like gastro. This kind of lactose intolerance usually lasts only for a short time.

It is important to talk to a GP about how to test for lactose intolerance.

Eating and drinking

- Make meals with foods that do not contain lactose. Gradually add back foods like yoghurt, milk and cheese as symptoms improve.
- Keep breastfeeding. There is no reason for a breastfeeding mum to change what they eat.
- If babies are having infant formula use a low lactose formula for a while.
- In children over 12 months, low lactose milk or a dairy milk alternatives such as soy milk or nut milk may be used (check the brand you choose has 100 mg calcium per 100 ml added).
- Yoghurt and cheese are lower in lactose as this gets broken down as it is made. Some people can eat these foods without causing upsets.
- Reading food labels will help you check sources of lactose (milk, milk powders, dry milk solids, whey powder, yoghurt, cheese, cheese powder, cream cheese, cream) in store-bought packaged foods.

What to know more

Ask your GP or child health nurse.