



Low-Lactose Food Choices

Some children feel sick after eating foods that have lactose in them. It may be helpful for your child to avoid or limit foods with lactose.

What is lactose?

Lactose is a natural sugar found in milk and dairy-based ingredients and products. Some children feel sick after eating foods that have lactose in them and are considered “lactose intolerant.” Symptoms include abdominal pain, excess gas, bloating and diarrhea (or constipation for some). Avoiding foods with lactose may be helpful for your child. Each child differs in how much lactose they can digest before feeling sick.

Use the chart below to help select foods that are low in lactose. In general, your child should avoid foods high in lactose. Foods low in lactose can be eaten sometimes. Lactase enzyme tablets such as Lactaid can sometimes help children digest lactose. Ask your child’s doctor if lactase enzymes may help your child.

How do I read food labels?

Read the ingredient list on packaged foods. Even foods that you think wouldn’t contain milk or dairy can contain lactose. This includes breads, lunch meats, frosting, packaged sauces, gravies, salad dressings, baked goods, snack bars, candy and cream soups. Look for these words on labels that mean the food contains lactose:

- Milk solids or nonfat milk solids
- Whey
- Lactose
- Margarine
- Sweet or sour cream
- Buttermilk
- Malted milk
- Sweetened condensed milk

Helpful hints

- Use small portions of foods that are moderate or high in lactose.
- Kosher foods marked “pareve” or “parve” are milk free.
- Soy, rice, coconut, oat, and almond milks, lactose-reduced milk, or Acidophilus milk are often well tolerated by people who are lactose intolerant. These products are good substitutes for regular milk
- Choose lactose-free or dairy free margarine and butter products available in stores.
- Lactase enzyme (such as Lactaid) tablets, capsules or drops may help your child digest foods with lactose in them. Follow the instructions on the package for information on how much enzyme to take.

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- Ask your pharmacist or the manufacturer if medications or vitamins that your child takes contain lactose. If they do, ask for another type.

How can I make sure my child gets enough calcium?

Ask your child's doctor or dietitian if you are concerned about your child getting enough calcium in their diet. They can provide you with information on how much calcium your child needs, and a list of non-dairy foods that contain calcium

Dairy products

Lactose free (no lactose per serving)	Low lactose (0-4 grams per serving)	Moderate lactose (5-9 grams per serving)	High lactose (10-30 grams per serving)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lactose-free milk (1 cup) including: whole, 2% and non-fat• Lactose-free and dairy free margarines• Nondairy whipped topping• Nondairy creamers• Yogurts and ice creams made from non-dairy milk substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lactose-reduced milk (1 cup)• Cottage cheese, 1% milk fat (½ cup)• Sour cream (½ cup)• Cheese (1 ounce): American, bleu, cheddar, cream cheese, parmesan, brie, gouda, Swiss, provolone, colby, ricotta or mozzarella• Butter and margarine (1 teaspoon)• Cream cheese (1 ounce)• Whipping cream (½ cup)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yogurt, low-fat (½ cup)• Half and half (½ cup)• Velveeta Cheese (1 ounce)• Ice cream (½ cup)• Ice milk (½ cup)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milk (1 cup) including: whole, low-fat, non-fat, goat's milk, buttermilk, evaporated milk (undiluted), sweetened, condensed milk (undiluted), chocolate milk, chocolate drink mixes• Milkshakes (fast-food restaurant)• Powdered milk

Non-dairy drinks

- Milk substitutes such as soy, nut or rice milks
 - 100% fruit juice, tea, fruit drinks
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Protein foods

Lactose free (no lactose per serving)	Low lactose (0-4 grams per serving)	Moderate lactose (5-9 grams per serving)	High lactose (10-30 grams per serving)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beans, peas and lentils (plain)• Peanut butter, all nuts and seeds• Meat, fish, poultry, tofu, eggs – cooked, plain or canned without milk or milk products	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breaded or battered meat, fish, or poultry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creamed meat, fish or poultry

Vegetables and fruits

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh fruits and vegetables• Vegetable juice or soup• Canned fruits and vegetables, plain• Tomato paste or sauce without cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tomato and spaghetti sauce with cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breaded vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creamed vegetables and creamed vegetable soups• Scalloped or butter-added vegetables (packaged)• Instant potatoes• Cheesy vegetables
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Grains

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rice, rye, cornmeal, barley or pasta (plain)• Hot or cold cereal (plain)• Rice cakes, graham crackers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cereals, crackers and bread (read labels carefully)• English muffin, bagel, or bread prepared without milk or milk products• Plain popcorn, pretzels, chips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ranch or cheese flavored chips and snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biscuits, muffins, rolls, donuts, pancakes and waffles (if made with milk products)
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Fats and sweets

Lactose free (no lactose per serving)	Low lactose (0-4 grams per serving)	Moderate lactose (5-9 grams per serving)	High lactose (10-30 grams per serving)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oils, shortening, lard, real mayonnaise• Olives• Sugar and sugar substitutes• Angel food cake, fruit roll ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Butter and margarine (1 teaspoon)• Sherbet, orange (½ cup)• Animal crackers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caramel, toffee, butterscotch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milk chocolate candy• Cakes and frosting• Gravies and cream sauces

To Learn More

- Nutrition
206-987-4758
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Sample menu

Breakfast

Orange juice, banana, toast with jelly, oatmeal made with water

Lunch

Vegetable and noodle soup, pear, crackers with peanut butter, lactose-free milk

Dinner

Salad, baked chicken breast, baked potato, dinner roll, angel food cake with berries, lactose-free milk

Snacks

Dried fruit, popcorn, animal crackers, vegetable sticks, lactose-free milk

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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