

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose is the natural sugar found in milk and certain dairy products. Some people develop intolerance to this sugar after weight-loss surgery. Lactose intolerance is most common with gastric bypass (GBP) yet possible with sleeve gastrectomy (SG).

Symptoms, which can occur soon after weight-loss surgery, are experienced when lactose is consumed. They include gas, bloating, cramping, and diarrhea.

Prevention

Your symptoms may go away if you replace milk with soy milk (without added sugar), if you switch to lactose-free milk (e.g., Lactaid milk, HEB Mootopia), or if you take over-the-counter lactase supplements. Lactase drops or pills should be taken when the milk product is consumed.

Some people who are more sensitive to lactose will need to restrict their diets further, eliminating such foods as sugar-free puddings and yogurt. If symptoms do not go away when lactose is eliminated, consider other possible causes.

Over time, people with lactose intolerance may adapt and be able to tolerate some amount of lactose in their diet. If you decide to try milk, start with a small amount and see how you respond. Often, people can better tolerate milk or milk products when they are consumed with meals.

Sources of Lactose

If you have cut out milk and yogurt but still experience diarrhea and bloating after eating certain foods, check the ingredients on food labels for “hidden” sources of lactose. The following ingredients indicate that the food contains lactose:

- Lactose
- Milk
- Whey (however, whey protein isolate does not contain lactose)
- Whey protein concentrate
- Milk by-products
- Dry milk solids
- Nonfat dry milk powder

People who are very sensitive to lactose may need to severely limit lactose intake. Foods with small amounts of lactose can include:

- Breads
- Baked goods
- Cereals
- Soups
- Margarine
- Salad dressings
- Candies
- Pancake and biscuit mixes
- Frozen dinners