

Are You Allergic to Dairy? Lactose Intolerant? or Simply Sensitive to Dairy?

Sirine Takieddine*

American University, Dubai JLT Lake Shore Tower, United Arab Emirates

*Corresponding author: Sirine Takieddine, American University, Dubai JLT Lake Shore Tower, United Arab Emirates, Tel: 00971 50 6911468; E-mail: sirinetaki@gmail.com

Rec Date: Dec 28, 2015, Acc Date: 28 Dec, 2015, Pub Date: 08 Jan, 2016

Copyright: © 2016 Takieddine S. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

There is a lot of confusion when it comes to dairy products. The difference between intolerance to lactose and allergic to milk are two different things, and they can be easily misunderstood.

What is Lactose Intolerance?

Milk and milk products contains a natural sugar known as lactose. People who are lactose intolerant don't have (or don't produce enough of) the enzyme lactase. In this case, you don't have to give up milk and milk products completely.

Steps to consuming milk without having symptoms:

Find your degree of tolerance

- Try small quantities of milk products at a time
- Gradually increase the amount until you start having symptoms, and this is when you know that is your limit.
- Build your tolerance: "The MORE milk you drink, the more you CAN drink!"
- Drink milk with meals or other foods, not by itself or on an empty stomach
- Start with 1/4th cup, ½ cup and then 1 cup/day
- Chocolate milk is better tolerated than regular milk.

Don't give up on milk products completely

- Yogurt contains live bacteria known as probiotics that will help break down the lactose and is generally tolerated by many people even with severe intolerance to lactose
- Hard cheeses are also well tolerated because they contain almost no lactose
- Margarines and butter contain very small quantities of lactose
- Consume more lactose-free milk, soy milk, rice milk or almond milk
- use lactose drops or tablets with lactose-containing foods

Why shouldn't you give up on milk completely?

Instead of solving a small problem you might have by avoiding dairies completely, you might be having other more severe complications, such as: Osteoporosis (brittle bone disease), High blood pressure, Some forms of cancer (mainly colon). Deficiency of some nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, Vitamin B2 and vitamin B12.

Did you Start Suddenly Having Symptoms after Consuming Milk when you Became Older?

This is very normal as well as common. People start losing the enzyme lactase as they get older, because the lactase production

decreases. Do not give up on milk completely at this age because you need to build stronger bones to avoid osteoporosis. Follow steps above to avoid symptoms.

What Does it Mean to be Allergic to Milk and Milk Products?

When you are allergic to milk, it means you are allergic to two proteins in the milk known as casein and whey. Therefore, your body absorbs the milk because you have the enzyme lactase, but you are allergic to the two proteins whey and casein so your body reacts to this allergy. It is similar for people who have nut allergy, egg allergy or fish allergy. Its symptoms are more severe than being just intolerant to milk. Its symptoms include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, skin rash, wheezing, narrowing in the airway resulting in difficulty breathing. Being allergic to milk can be life threatening and this is why you should be avoiding dairy completely. Note: Ghee (clarified butter) can be consumed by people who are allergic to milk because both casein and whey have been removed.

Some people will outgrow this allergy from 3 years and above, other people will live with it forever. It is extremely individualized and this is why tests should be done every now and then to know the status of your milk allergy. If you are allergic to milk or any other product always carry Epipen (Consult your physician to know where you should inject it and how to use it), because you might consume a product that has milk without you knowing it and if you are severely allergic then that might be life-threatening.

Do we need vitamins and minerals for people who are intolerant or allergic?

Always do regular blood tests to know if you have any deficiency in Vitamin D and B12, if you know then you will need supplements. If you start feeling like you're having symptoms after consuming milk or milk products, start investigating first before assuming that you should avoid milk completely. Are you milk intolerant? Or are you allergic to milk? If you are intolerant, how intolerant are you? These are questions that your physician and your dietitian can help find out and give you alternatives to avoid any other health complications on the long run.