

## **The 411 on Lactose Intolerance and Lifeway Kefir**

### **What is lactose intolerance?**

A double scoop of ice cream on a hot summer day. A familiar bowl of cereal and milk in the morning. Creamy mac n cheese served steaming at the dinner table. Throughout any given day, dairy works its way into our diets in a number of delicious and comforting ways. But for people with lactose intolerance, the inability to digest lactose (the primary sugar found in milk), renders these foods – and the pleasure associated with them – off-limits.

Between 30 and 50 million Americans suffer from lactose intolerance (African Americans, American Indians, and Asian Americans are more likely to be affected). These individuals don't produce enough of an enzyme called lactase, normally made by cells that line the small intestine, which breaks down lactose into a more easily absorbable unit. The result: Discomfort ranging from mild-to-intense nausea, cramps, bloating, gas, and diarrhea.

### **What are the symptoms?**

As mentioned above, the main symptoms of lactose intolerance include nausea, cramps, bloating, gas, and diarrhea. Onset of symptoms can occur anywhere from a half-hour to two hours following a lactose-containing food or meal. But besides the digestive discomfort, lactose intolerance can wreak havoc on one's nutritional status. Dairy products like skim milk provide essential nutrients, including as calcium, vitamins A and D, riboflavin, and phosphorus.

### **What can you do?**

Fortunately, many people with lactose intolerance can still enjoy some milk-containing foods in small doses, gradually increasing their tolerance. You can also experiment with various dairy products – for instance, Swiss or cheddar cheeses contain less lactose than softer cheeses. Lactose intolerant individuals may also be able to consume cultured milk products, like yogurt, as the bacteria used in the culturing process naturally create the enzyme that breaks down lactose.

An array of lactose-reduced or lactose-free products, from milk to soy cheese pizza, can be found at many mainstream grocery stores. And of course, calcium can be found in non-dairy products, including broccoli, leafy greens, almonds, and calcium-fortified juices.

The Mayo Clinic also suggests using probiotics to build your tolerance to lactose. That's where Lifeway Kefir comes in....

### **How can kefir help?**

Kefir is the most favorable milk product for people suffering from lactose intolerance. A recent study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* examined people struggling with lactose intolerance and found that kefir can actually *improve* lactose digestion. The reasoning? Kefir's live, active bacteria cultures help break down the sugars in milk.

The researchers asked 15 adults to try five test foods: 2% milk; plain kefir; raspberry-flavored kefir; plain yogurt; and raspberry-flavored yogurt, each following a 12-hour fast. Study participants reported having little or no symptoms associated with lactose intolerance after eating both types of yogurt and kefir,

according to sciencedaily.com In fact, drinking kefir reduced flatulence frequency by more than half when compared with milk.

"Both kefir and yogurt improve lactose digestion simply because some of the bacterial cells give up their lives in the intestinal tract, release their enzymes and digest the lactose," said study co-author Steven Hertzler. "It's a one-shot deal. However, kefir has additional microorganisms that may be able to colonize the intestines and benefit health further by protecting the intestine against disease-causing bacteria."

One cup of Lifeway Kefir supplies 30% of one's daily calcium needs, with very little lactose. You get all the benefit of drinking kefir – low-fat, high protein, high in bone-strengthening calcium – without the stomach upset that can come with other dairy products.

Nobody knows that better than Shari Hixson, 41, from Chattanooga, TN. In 2008, her mother tipped her off to Lifeway Lowfat Pomegranate kefir – both women suffer from irregularity and Shari is lactose intolerant. "She told me, 'Just try it – I guarantee it's not going to hurt you and it WILL get your system moving.'" She gave it a try, drinking 8 oz a day, and within the first week, "My stomach instantly felt soothed. I had no cramping, the bloating was gone. Everything was moving better." Now Shari can enjoy creamy dairy products without the repercussions that accompany milk for those with lactose intolerance. And, she says, "I'm recommending it to everyone I know!"

#### **CHART:**

#### **Calcium and Lactose in Common Foods**

<b>Nondairy Products</b>	<b>Calcium Content</b>	<b>Lactose Content</b>
Soymilk, fortified, 1 cup	200–300 mg	0
Sardines, with edible bones, 3 oz.	270 mg	0
Salmon, canned, with edible bones, 3 oz.	205 mg	0
Broccoli, raw, 1 cup	90 mg	0
Orange, 1 medium	50 mg	0
Pinto beans, 1/2 cup	40 mg	0
Tuna, canned, 3 oz.	10 mg	0
Lettuce greens, 1/2 cup	10 mg	0

## Dairy Products

Yogurt, plain, low-fat, 1 cup	415 mg	5 g
Milk, reduced fat, 1 cup	295 mg	11 g
LIFEWAY KEFIR, 1 cup	295 mg	2 g (approx.)
Swiss cheese, 1 oz.	270 mg	1 g
Ice cream, 1/2 cup	85 mg	6 g
Cottage cheese, 1/2 cup	75 mg	2–3 g

*Adapted from Manual of Clinical Dietetics. 6th ed. American Dietetic Association, 2000; and Soy Dairy Alternatives.  
Available at: [www.soyfoods.org](http://www.soyfoods.org).*

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