

The American Academy of Pediatrics Recommends Dairy Foods for Most Children with Lactose Intolerance

A new report* from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), released in the September 2006 issue of *Pediatrics*, recommends that children with primary lactose intolerance consume some milk and other dairy foods as part of a healthy diet in order to get the recommended amount of calcium, vitamin D, protein and other nutrients that are essential for bone health and overall growth.

ABSTRACT

“The American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition presents an updated review of lactose intolerance in infants, children, and adolescents. Differences between primary, secondary, congenital, and developmental lactase deficiency that may result in lactose intolerance are discussed. Children with suspected lactose intolerance can be assessed clinically by dietary lactose elimination or by tests including noninvasive hydrogen breath testing or invasive intestinal biopsy determination of lactase (and other disaccharidase) concentrations. Treatment consists of use of lactase-treated dairy products or oral lactase supplementation, limitation of lactose-containing foods, or dairy elimination. The American Academy of Pediatrics supports use of dairy foods as an important source of calcium for bone mineral health and of other nutrients that facilitate growth in children and adolescents. If dairy products are eliminated, other dietary sources of calcium or calcium supplements need to be provided.”

CONCLUSIONS

1. “Lactose intolerance is a common cause of abdominal pain in older children and teenagers.
2. Lactose intolerance attributable to primary lactase deficiency is uncommon before 2 to 3 years of age in all populations; when lactose malabsorption becomes apparent before 2 to 3 years of age, other etiologies must be sought.
3. Evaluation for lactose intolerance can be achieved relatively easily by dietary elimination and challenge. More-formal testing is usually noninvasive, typically with fecal pH in the presence of watery diarrhea and hydrogen breath testing.
4. If lactose-free diets are used for treatment of lactose intolerance, the diets should include a good source of calcium and/or calcium supplementation to meet daily recommended intake levels.
5. Treatment of lactose intolerance by elimination of milk and other dairy products is not usually necessary given newer approaches to lactose intolerance, including the use of partially digested products (such as yogurts, cheeses, products containing *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, and pretreated milks). Evidence that avoidance of dairy products may lead to inadequate calcium intake and consequent suboptimal bone mineralization makes these important as alternatives to milk. Dairy products remain principle sources of protein and other nutrients that are essential for growth in children.”

* American Academy of Pediatrics, Lactose intolerance in infants, children, and adolescents. *Pediatrics*. 2006; 118 (3):1279-1286.





Choose Dairy Foods First

The AAP¹, 2005 Dietary Guidelines², and the National Medical Association³ recommend that individuals with lactose intolerance **choose dairy foods first** -- over supplements or other food sources of key dairy nutrients -- to improve overall diet quality and help ensure adequate nutrient intake. All three groups encourage consumption of **three servings of low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese or yogurt daily.**^{2,3,4}

Management Strategies for Children with Primary Lactose Intolerance:

For those who have trouble digesting lactose, the following tips can be used to help keep dairy foods in the diet:

- Drink 4 to 8 ounces of milk with food spaced throughout the day.
- Aged cheeses like Cheddar and Swiss are low in lactose.
- Introduce dairy slowly. Gradually increase the amount.
- Reduce it. Enjoy lactose-free milk and milk products or use oral lactase replacement capsules.
- Yogurt with live and active cultures helps digest lactose.

Visit www.nationaldairycouncil.org for more information.

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics, Lactose intolerance in infants, children, and adolescents. *Pediatrics*. 2006; 118 (3):1279-1286.

² HHS and USDA, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005.

³ Wooten, W, et. al. The Role of Dairy and Dairy Nutrients in the Diet of African Americans. *Journal of National Medical Association*. 2004; 96(12):20S-24S.

⁴ American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Nutrition. Optimizing bone health and calcium intake of infants, children, and adolescents. *Pediatrics*. 2006; 117: 578-585.



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