

Lactose Intolerance: Practical Solutions for Adults

07/15/2025

What is Lactose Intolerance?

Lactose intolerance happens when your small intestine does not make enough lactase. Lactase is an enzyme that helps break down the sugar in milk, called lactose.

Symptoms can include:

- Gas
- Bloating
- Stomach cramps
- Nausea & Vomiting
- Diarrhea

MyPlate and Calcium

MyPlate suggests drinking 2 to 3 cups of milk every day to get about 1,000 milligrams of calcium. Calcium helps keep your bones and teeth strong. It also helps your muscles and nerves work well. If you don't drink milk, you can eat yogurt, cheese, calcium-fortified soy or almond milk, leafy greens like kale, canned salmon with bones, or fortified cereal. Adults need about 1,000 milligrams of calcium each day.

Some dairy sources, such as aged cheeses and yogurts with live active cultures, may be more tolerable for individuals with mild lactose intolerance because they naturally contain less lactose or include bacteria that help digest it. Additionally, lactose-free dairy products and lactase enzyme supplements are available to help improve digestion and reduce symptoms.

Alternatives to Milk	Serving Size	Calcium (mg)	Lactose (g)
Lactose-Free Milk	1 cup	~300 mg	0 g

Alternatives to Milk	Serving Size	Calcium (mg)	Lactose (g)
Yogurt with Live Cultures	1 cup	~300 mg	~5-8 g
Cheddar Cheese	1 slice or 1 oz	200 mg	0 g
Fortified Soy Milk	1 cup	200-400 mg	0 g
Tofu	1/2 cup	430 mg	0 g
Collard Greens	1 cup	~80 mg	0 g
Broccoli (cooked)	1 cup	60 mg	0 g
Almonds	1 oz	~420 mg	0 g

Why Calcium Matters

Calcium is a mineral that keeps your bones and teeth strong. Getting enough calcium helps prevent osteoporosis. Calcium also helps your muscles move, your nerves send signals, and your blood clot when you get a cut. Eating food with calcium every day is important for good health. For personalized support on incorporating calcium into your diet when dealing with lactose intolerance or an allergy, please consult a *Registered Dietitian*.

Broccoli with Toasted Almonds Recipe

Ingredients

- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 2 tablespoons sliced or slivered almonds
- 1 teaspoon olive oil (optional)
- Pinch of salt

Instructions

1. Steam or microwave broccoli until tender but still bright green (about 3–4 minutes).
2. In a small dry pan, toast almonds over medium heat for 2–3 minutes until lightly golden.
3. Place broccoli in a bowl, drizzle with olive oil if using, and sprinkle almonds and salt on top.

4. Serve warm as a side dish or snack.

References

Office of Dietary Supplements, National Institutes of Health. (2023, October 6). *Calcium: Fact sheet for health professionals*. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Calcium-HealthProfessional/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). *Dairy group—One of the five food groups*. MyPlate.gov. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/dairy>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. (n.d.). *FoodDataCentral: Milk, whole, 3.25% milkfat, with added vitamin D*. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/food-details/173414/nutrients>

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. (n.d.). *Lactose intolerance*. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/lactose-intolerance>