



Why should I take dairy foods out of my diet?

There are several reasons why this may be good for you. Many people are lactose intolerant. Or they could be allergic to casein (milk protein), or perhaps milk gives them excess respiratory mucus.

What is lactose intolerance?

Milk contains a sugar called lactose, and to break it down in our bodies, we need an enzyme called lactase. If we don't have enough or any lactase, then we are intolerant to lactose, and may have symptoms such as abdominal pain, cramping, bloating and flatulence, diarrhoea and constipation. This can happen any time from an hour to several days after eating the dairy food. Various populations in the world have lactose intolerance, including most Asians, Africans, Indians, and many indigenous groups, but also around 15% of Caucasians.

What about casein?

Casein is milk protein, and cows' milk has very high levels. It is hard to digest, but only about 3% of the population really has a true milk allergy. There are three types: alpha, beta and kappa casein. Beta casein comes in A1 and A2 varieties, and A2 milk, which is less common in Australia, may be tolerated by people with dairy allergy. For more information, visit <http://www.a2corporation.com/>



But don't I get all my calcium from dairy?

Certainly dairy foods are good sources of calcium, but it is not impossible to get your 800-1400mg per day of calcium from other foods. You also need to be aware of several factors that can reduce calcium absorption, even if you DO eat dairy. Lack of Vitamin D which we get from sun exposure, and excessively low cholesterol can mean that calcium isn't absorbed. Plenty of magnesium will help, and weight bearing exercise is one of the best means to avoid osteoporosis. Of course you can also take a calcium supplement. Other foods that contain calcium are eggs, fish, soy products, nuts, seeds, grains, crude molasses, meats, some fruits and vegetables (figs, parsley, watercress, onions, spinach, broccoli, silverbeet).

What about eating out?

Well, you'd want to avoid pizzas and Italian food, but many Asian restaurants will use little or no dairy foods in their meals. Try Thai, Chinese, Indian, Mexican, African or Japanese. You could also try normal restaurants, phone ahead to talk to the chef, or mention to the waiter when ordering that you cannot eat dairy foods, and try to go for veg and meat or fish dishes that aren't battered. Ask the waiter to check with the chef if in doubt. If you eat a bit of dairy, it isn't a tragedy, so don't scream or be stressed. Just avoid it next time.



How do I decipher labels in the supermarket? They can use weird names.

Look at all labels carefully, and avoid any that have milk, milk solids, cream, cheese, yoghurt, butter, casein, caseinate (including potassium, sodium or any other caseinate), curds, whey. Margarines, mayonnaises, and even soy cheeses can sometimes contain milk solids or casein. Dried milk has a much higher level of lactose than other dairy products. If in doubt, don't!

What about yoghurt?

The beneficial bacteria in yoghurt have partially digested the lactose, and often this is the one cows' milk product that can be tolerated, but first you need to go completely dairy-free for a while, then reintroduce yoghurt and see if you have any ill effects from it. If not, then include small amounts of yoghurt in your diet.





Foods to avoid

Milk
Cheese
Yoghurt
Ice cream
desserts
Butter/spreads

Buttermilk
Battered foods
Chocolate
Biscuits/Crackers
Breads
Mayonnaise

Substitutes

Rice or soy milk, nut milks, sheep or goat milk**
Goat or sheep cheeses including fetta, soy cheese, tofu
Goat or sheep yoghurt or soy yoghurt
Soy ice cream, non-dairy gelato, fruit sorbet, frozen soy

Avocado, nut butters, tahini, hommous, tofu, soy cheese,
olive oil
Coconut milk, ghee, copha
Use wholemeal flour, soy milk and eggs
Organic dark chocolate (read label) or carob products
Rice crackers, Ryvita, rice cakes, Salada (read labels)
100% rye breads or read the labels
Make with egg yolk, lemon juice, olive oil and mustard
(optional)



Other hints:

Weight-bearing exercise is one of the best ways to increase bone density. Walking, dancing, Tai chi, Qigong, weights are all good, along with yoga for flexibility. Try to avoid stress. Stress impacts on almost every body system, and hinders absorption of nutrients from food. If you want good calcium absorption from food, chew slowly, eat in quiet, stress-free places and enjoy every bite. Twenty minutes of sunshine on face and arms or legs (without sunscreen) either early in the morning or late afternoon will provide sufficient vitamin D to work with calcium for good absorption. When eating out, be wary of ordering battered foods; for example, calamari rings may have a milk batter.

** Sheep and goat milks contain lactose, but in lower amounts than cows' milk. If your intolerance is only mild, you may be able to tolerate small amounts of these products without any ill effects. If your sensitivity is purely to cows' milk, then you can certainly have them. If you include them on your dairy free diet and continue to have bad effects, eliminate them.



Resources:

Try your local library and bookstores. Here are a couple that are available.

Books:

Glenis Lucas: *The Complete Guide to Gluten-Free and Dairy-Free Cooking*. Baker & Taylor, 2006
Grace Cheetham: *The Best Gluten-Free, Wheat-Free and Dairy-Free Recipes*. Duncan Baird, 2007

Websites:

<http://au.lifestyle.yahoo.com/health/reference/20082008/dairy-free-diet/index.html>
<http://dairyfreecooking.about.com/od/dairyfreebasics/u/getstarted.htm>
<http://www.godairyfree.org/>
<http://www.wellness.com/reference/diet/dairy-free-diet/>
<http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/nutrition/dairy-free.php>

