



Lactose Intolerance

Lactose is the sugar in milk and consists of the two sugars glucose and galactose. Lactase is the enzyme that breaks down lactose in the small intestine. As people age, the amount of lactase decreases in the intestine so that ingested lactose is not broken down in the colon causing lactose intolerance. Bacteria in the colon react with the increased lactose causing gas, bloating, abdominal pain, and diarrhea.

Lactose intolerance is more common in Asian, American Indian and Black populations than in Caucasian populations.

Lactose intolerance does not pose any health risk. Avoiding dietary lactose, particularly in milk or other dairy products and non-dairy creamers, is effective in preventing symptoms. Use of lactaid or other lactase products can also help prevent symptoms.