

Milk Allergy

In addition to the general information about food allergies, here are some issues that people with a milk allergy should know about.

Milk allergy or lactose intolerance

A milk allergy occurs when a person's immune system reacts abnormally to milk proteins; it can be life-threatening. Intolerance to lactose occurs when a person can't digest lactose, a primary component of milk, because their body doesn't produce enough of a specific enzyme. Symptoms of lactose intolerance include abdominal pain, bloating and diarrhea. If you are unsure whether you have a milk allergy or are lactose intolerance, consult an allergist.

Read the labels

If you're allergic to milk, the only way to avoid a reaction is to avoid all food and products that contain milk and milk derivatives. Don't eat a food or product if the label has precautionary statements such as "may contain milk". Read ingredient lists carefully and learn to identify other names for milk, such as lactose and casein. Do not consume a food or product if there is no ingredient list or if there is a risk they might have been in contact with milk. If there is not enough information to make a decision, you can always call to ask the company or speak to a knowledgeable person at a restaurant.

Outgrowing a milk allergy

Studies suggest that while up to four percent of infants are allergic to milk, for many of these infants the allergy will disappear within three years. A severe milk allergy, though, can be a lifelong condition. Consult your allergist before reintroducing your child to milk products.



Sources of milk

The proteins in cow's milk are very similar to those found in milk from goats, sheep and other ruminants (such as deer or buffalo). Therefore, people who are allergic to cow's milk may also experience reactions to the milk of other ruminants. Consult your allergist before consuming milk or products made from the milk of goats, sheep or other ruminants.

Because of its high protein content and its value as an emulsifying and texturizing agent, milk is common in many processed foods. Carefully review ingredient lists on all processed food to identify sources of milk.

Common sources of milk

Butter, Buttermilk
Cheese, curds
Cream, ice cream
Ghee and butter fat
Kefir (milk drink)
Kumiss (fermented milk drink)
Sour cream
Yogourt

Other names for milk

Beta-lactoglobulin
Casein, rennet casein
Caseinate (ammonium caseinate, calcium caseinate, magnesium caseinate, potassium caseinate, and sodium caseinate)
Delactosed or demineralized whey
Dry milk, milk solids
Hydrolyzed casein and hydrolyzed milk protein
Lactalbumin and lactalbumin phosphate
Lactose
Lactoferrin, lactoglobulin
Milk derivative, fat and protein
Modified milk ingredients
Whey and whey protein concentrate

Food and products that contain or often contain milk

Artificial butter, butter flavour or butter oil
Dark chocolate
Baked goods (including some type of breads) and baking mixes
Battered and fried foods
Broth and bouillons
Caramel colouring or flavouring

Casseroles, frozen prepared foods
Cereals, cookies and crackers
Chocolate bars
Desserts, for example, custards, frozen yogourts, ice creams and puddings
Dips and salad dressings
Egg and fat substitutes
Fat replacers, for example, Opta and Simplese
Glazes
Gravies and sauces
High-protein flour
Malt-drink mixes
Margarine
Pâtés and sausages
Pizza
Potatoes (instant, mashed and scalloped potatoes)
Seasonings
Soups and soup mixes, cream soups
Soy cheese

Other possible sources of milk

Canned tuna, for example, seasoned or mixed with other ingredients for flavour
Candy, fruit and granola bars, for example, those containing caramel or chocolate
Flavoured coffee, coffee whitener and non-dairy creamer
Some french fries (made from potato mixture or mashed potatoes)
Some hot dogs, deli and processed meats
Nougats
Seasoned chips, for example, sour cream and onion
Waxes on some fruit and vegetables

Non-food sources of milk

Cosmetics
Medications
Pet food

Ingredients that do not contain milk protein

(Although these ingredients have names similar to milk components, they are not actually related to milk, and are therefore safe for consumption by those with milk allergies.)

Calcium and sodium lactate
Calcium and sodium stearoyl lactylate
Cocoa butter
Cream of tartar
Oleoresin