

## Dairy Free Diet...

With so much conflicting information in the press it can be hard to know what the right thing to eat really is. With many wellness gurus promoting dairy free and sneering at the mere mention of cow's milk, I encourage you to listen to your body and watch for signs and symptoms of dairy intolerance to be able to really know if going dairy free is the best option for you.



Lactose intolerance and casein (the protein found in milk) can cause a number of reactions in the body such as inflammation, bloating, IBS, allergies, excess mucous production, sinusitis etc.

Eliminating dairy from the diet may alleviate symptoms and encourage health and vitality. Keep a food diary for at least 3 weeks to monitor your signs and symptoms.

Dairy does contain minerals and vitamins such as calcium, vitamin A and vitamin D, so if you are completely cutting dairy out of your diet be sure to do so under the guidance of a qualified healthcare professional to ensure that you are not missing out on any important nutrients.

### So what about calcium?

Dairy foods are good sources of calcium however calcium is available in a variety of foods such as green leafy vegetables and oily fish such as salmon. Green leafy vegetables are also high in magnesium, another cofactor required for healthy bone production.

Lack of vitamin D (from sun exposure) and very low cholesterol levels can inhibit calcium absorption. A short, daily walk in the sunshine will aid vitamin D production and weight bearing exercise is one of the best ways to prevent osteoporosis.

## Non dairy calcium sources

Include a variety of foods from the list below to ensure adequate nutrient intake, particularly calcium.

Green leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach, almonds, hazelnuts, sesame seeds, tahini spread, chick peas, tofu, salmon, sardines, dried figs, soy milk, baked beans, calcium fortified cereals.

Here are some tips on how to incorporate many of these foods into your diet to increase your calcium intake:

- Cook vegetable stir-fry and toss with diced tofu
- Add steamed and minced greens like collards, spinach and kale to casseroles, soups and stews
- Use calcium-fortified non-dairy milk (like almond or rice milk) instead of water in recipes such as pancakes, mashed potatoes, and oats
- Use almond butter instead of peanut butter
- Add calcium-rich beans like black-eyed peas or chick peas to soups, pasta sauces

## Label reading and eating out

Read food labels carefully as many products may contain dairy derivatives that you may not be aware of.

Avoid any foods that contain:

- Milk,
- Milk solids
- Cheese
- Cream
- Butter
- Mayonnaise
- Margarine
- Yoghurt
- Curds
- Whey protein
- Casein
- Caseinate (e.g. sodium or potassium caseinate).



Soy products may also contain dairy derivatives so always read the label. Dairy can be hidden in a variety of foods such as cookies, cakes, packaged foods, breads, chocolate, lollies, pies, packet sauces, powdered drinks.

Yoghurt tends to be more easily digested than many other dairy products due to the beneficial bacteria in the yoghurt partially digesting the lactose.

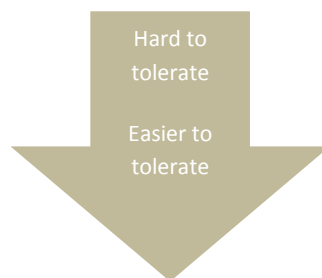
Butter also has small amounts of lactose and most people that are lactose intolerant can tolerate small amounts of butter. Ghee or clarified butter is a lactose free butter alternative.

When eating out, avoid creamy sauces, cheeses, battered foods, and be sure to inform the waiter if in any doubt e.g. omelettes, scrambled eggs and many sauces may have milk or butter added.

## Avoid the no no's

Some dairy products are more allergy response provoking than others. Avoid the below foods listed in harder to easier order of tolerance

- Ice Cream
- Milk
- Hard cheese
- Soft Cheese
- Cream



## Dairy substitutes

### Ice Cream

*Substitutes:* Fruit Sorbets, Soy ice cream, fresh fruit ice blocks, frozen pureed bananas

### Milk

*Substitutes:* Rice, soy, almond, goat's milk. Soy milk and coconut milks are better for cooking.

Many plant based milks have lots of added nasties such as gums, preservatives, inflammatory vegetable oils and sugar. **Read your labels carefully and if there are lots of ingredients on the label that you do not recognise, put it back on the shelf!**

Goat's milk does contain small amounts of lactose. If you are mildly intolerant to lactose you may have small amounts however if you find



you are experiencing any adverse symptoms eliminate completely.

**Cheese**

*Substitutes: Goats/Sheep's Cheese, Soy Cheese (check the labels)*

**Cream**

*Substitutes: Coconut cream, soy ice cream with desserts*

**Butter**

*Substitutes: Avocado, nut butters, hummus, tahini, olive oil, coconut oil*

**Yoghurt**

*Substitutes: Goat/sheep yoghurt or coconut yoghurt*

**Battered food**

*Substitutes: Flour, plant milk (soy, almond etc.), eggs*

**Chocolate**

*Substitutes: Carob or bitter dark organic chocolate (check labels)*

Whilst cutting down on dairy can help to improve certain health conditions do be aware that simply swapping dairy to non-dairy alternatives is not always the healthiest option. Many dairy substitutes are heavily processed and often contain additives, flavours, sugar, salt and GM soy which may be worse for your health than fresh, natural dairy products! The answer is to always choose the least processed foods that are closest to their natural state as they would be found in nature. The less processed the food, the healthier it is.