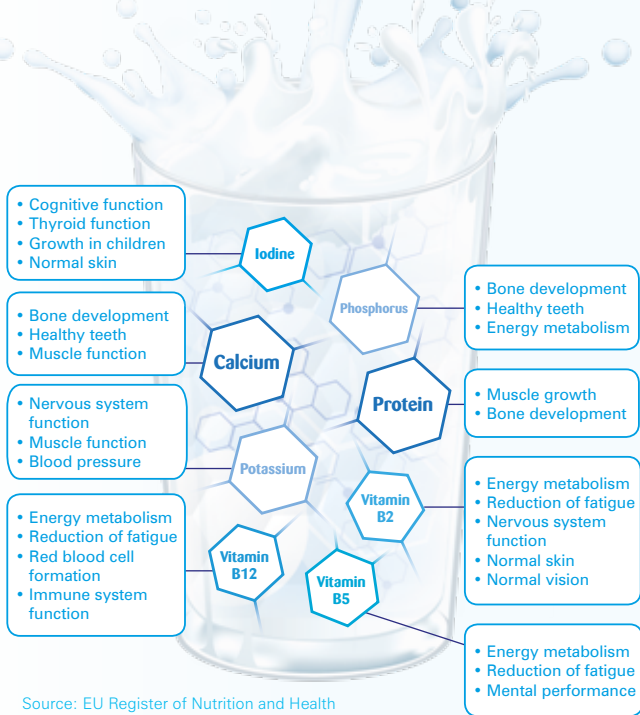


## Good to know

A suspected allergy or intolerance requires medical diagnosis by an expert professional and appropriate management in order to avoid unnecessary changes to the diet.

The nutrients in milk and dairy contribute to the normal functioning of many processes in our bodies:



Source: EU Register of Nutrition and Health Claims made on foods.

## Did you know?

The genetic trait that enables people to digest lactose, known as lactase persistence, is recognised as an 'evolutionary advantage' that arose in populations that farmed dairy animals. This is due to the nutritional benefit provided by the wide range of vitamins and minerals in dairy foods.

## Useful Links:

The Irish Food & Allergy Network  
[ifan.ie](http://ifan.ie)

The Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institute  
[indi.ie](http://indi.ie)

Safefood  
[safefood.eu](http://safefood.eu)

Health Service Executive  
[hse.ie](http://hse.ie)

Nutrition Booklets free to order from  
[info@ndc.ie](mailto:info@ndc.ie)

- Children
- Teenagers
- Adults
- 50+ Years
- Dairy Myths & Misconceptions
- Sports Nutrition Handbook
- Bone, Muscle & Joint Health

# Dairy Allergy & Intolerance



National Dairy COUNCIL

 NDCIreland

 @NDC\_ie

[ndc.ie](http://ndc.ie)

2018

National Dairy COUNCIL

INDI  
Irish Nutrition + Dietetic Institute

# Dairy Allergy & Intolerance

'Food hypersensitivity' is an adverse reaction to a particular food. **Cow's milk protein allergy** and **lactose intolerance** are the two main hypersensitivities relating to dairy. Although they are often confused, they are two very distinct conditions requiring expert diagnosis.



## Cow's Milk Protein Allergy

### Common Symptoms

Symptoms are usually immediate (less than 2 hours) or delayed, depending on the allergy type.

- Gastrointestinal e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea
- Dermatological e.g. hives, rash
- Respiratory e.g. wheezing

If the reaction is severe, breathing problems can occur where the throat may swell up or close. This is an 'anaphylactic' reaction and requires immediate medical assistance.

### Caution

Symptoms can often be confused with those of other medical conditions and accurate diagnosis is essential. Take care as some non-medical tests have no scientific basis or proven role (e.g. hair analysis, isolated IgG testing, kinesiology, vega-testing, enzyme potential desensitisation).

Cutting out dairy could lead to nutritional inadequacies, so consultation with a registered dietitian is advised.

### Diagnosis

A focused clinical history combined with skin prick test and/or blood test for specific IgE antibodies is most common. Elimination and reintroduction testing should be performed under medical supervision.

### Prevalence in Ireland

2-3% (mainly infants, with up to 90% growing out of it by age 3-5 years)

### Management

Exclusion of milk-based foods for as long as the allergy persists.

Other mammalian milks such as goat and sheep are generally not suitable replacements as some may cause similar reactions.

Plant-based alternatives are not nutritionally comparable to cow's milk, so other foods should also be included to meet the nutritional shortfall.

A dietitian may use the 'milk ladder' approach to safely re-introduce dairy products if and when the allergy subsides.

## Lactose Intolerance

Symptoms are not life threatening and may start to appear 30 minutes to 2 hours after eating lactose-containing foods.

Mainly gastrointestinal e.g. upset stomach, trapped wind, diarrhoea, cramps, bloating.

Transient lactose intolerance, as a consequence of illness such as food poisoning, usually subsides within a few weeks.

Your practitioner will carry out elimination and reintroduction testing. They may also perform a hydrogen breath test.

4-5% in Ireland (varies in different parts of the world and by ethnicity)

Depending on tolerance level, most people can consume some lactose, which can be preferable than absolute exclusion. The majority with lactose maldigestion will tolerate up to 12 g as a single dose with no or minor symptoms.

*A 200 ml glass of milk contains approximately 9-10 g lactose, while the amounts in yogurt and cheese are considerably less - 5.9 g in 125 ml pot of plain whole yogurt and 0.03 g in 25 g of cheddar cheese.*

There are a number of lactose-free products available commercially, such as lactose-free milk.

Lactase supplements (the enzyme that digests lactose) are also available from pharmacies and health stores which can assist with lactose digestion, when taken at the correct time.