



# Attitudes & Beliefs About Lactose Intolerance & Lactose-Free Milk

The current Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends<sup>1</sup> three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy foods every day, yet Americans consume an average of just 1.8 servings of total dairy per day.<sup>2</sup> U.S. born Latinos and African Americans consume even less dairy, averaging 1.5-1.6 servings and 1.1 servings per day, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

Lactose intolerance is a potential, yet manageable, barrier to meeting dairy recommendations. A better understanding of people's perceptions and beliefs about lactose intolerance can help to effectively overcome this barrier and meet dairy recommendations.

## KEY INSIGHTS

### *People Want Solutions*

One-third of individuals with lactose intolerance symptoms surveyed say they would consider drinking milk again in the future if there was a way for them to drink milk without causing stomach discomfort or digestive problems. Lactose-free milk provides a tangible solution for those who'd like to get milk back in their diets, but only one-fifth of lactose intolerant consumers reach for lactose-free products as an answer.<sup>4</sup>

Recent research indicates that cost and perceptions about taste, as well as the incorrect belief that lactose-free milk is not "real milk," may be preventing individuals from trying lactose-free products.<sup>4</sup>

### *Lactose Intolerant Individuals Like Lactose-Free Milk*

Despite taste perceptions of lactose-free products, people like the taste of lactose-free milk better than several non-dairy alternatives.

In a blind taste study, nearly 900 adults (478 with lactose intolerance\*) were asked to rate their taste acceptance and liking of soy beverage (plain and vanilla) and lactose-free milk (reduced-fat and fat-free).<sup>5</sup>

The participants scored the lactose-free milk higher than the plain soy beverage, with reduced-fat, lactose-free milk being liked best, followed by fat-free, lactose-free milk.

\* In order to qualify for this study, individuals were either milk drinkers or willing to try a lactose-free product.

## Communicating the Benefits of Lactose-Free Milk

A study of more than 1000 adults with symptoms of lactose intolerance found that they were most receptive to information about lactose-free milk that communicated multiple benefits, such as nutrition and taste.<sup>6</sup> Health educators can utilize this finding by communicating that lactose-free milk is:

- *Real milk, just without the lactose*
- *Tastes great*
- *Provides the same essential nutrients as regular milk (including calcium, potassium, vitamin D and more)*

## Additional Management Strategies to Help People Enjoy Dairy Foods

A variety of additional strategies can help people with lactose intolerance enjoy milk and milk products without experiencing discomfort or embarrassment:

- **Sip it** – *Introduce dairy slowly to build your tolerance*
- **Stir it** – *Mix milk with food to slow its digestion, making lactose easier to digest*
- **Shred & Slice it** – *Top foods with natural cheeses, which are low in lactose*
- **Spoon it** – *Try easy-to-digest yogurt. The live and active cultures in yogurt help to digest lactose*



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Visit [www.NationalDairyCouncil.org/LactoseIntolerance](http://www.NationalDairyCouncil.org/LactoseIntolerance) for more information, lactose intolerance management strategies and education materials.

1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005. 6th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2005. Note: The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends 3 servings of low-fat or fat-free milk or milk products per day for individuals 9 years and older and 2 servings per day for children 2-8 years old.

2 Nutrition Impact, LLC. 2010. Dairy Nutrient Contributions, NHANES (2003-2006). Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Data. Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [2003-2004; 2005-2006]. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm]

3 Sharma S, et al. J Am Diet Assoc. 2004;104:1873-1877.

4 Dairy Management Inc. Milk Opportunities Study, 2009.

5 Moskowitz HR, et al. J Sensory Studies. 2009;24:731-748.

6 NPD. Lactose intolerance message testing, conducted on behalf of National Dairy Council, March 2010.