



## One Minute Paper -- Lactose Intolerance

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Children and adults with lactose intolerance develop cramps and other types of intestinal discomfort after consuming foods with lactose, namely milk, cheeses, and many other dairy products. Their body lacks the ability to produce adequate lactase, the enzyme required to breakdown lactose (milk sugar) so that it can be absorbed. Symptoms develop from the effects of undigested lactose in the intestinal tract.

A few options provide children with lactose intolerance with the unique combination of nutrients found in fluid milk. Lactose-free milk is treated with lactase and is nutritionally identical to standard milk. Lactase tablets can be taken immediately before drinking milk. Fermented dairy products, namely, yogurt, often are well-tolerated; the bacteria cultures in yogurt break down lactose in the intestine. Some soy and nondairy milk beverages are fortified to supply the same nutrients as cow's milk.

### **Nondairy beverages must match the nutrition profile of cow's milk**

<b>Nutrient</b>	<b>Content per 8 fl oz (1 cup)</b>
Calcium	276 mg
Protein	8 g
Vitamin A	500 IU
Vitamin D	100 IU
Magnesium.	24 mg
Phosphorus	222 mg
Potassium	349 mg
Riboflavin	0.44 mg
Vitamin B-12	1.1 mcg

On September 12, 2008, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published a final rule regarding nondairy beverage alternatives in school lunch and breakfast programs:

- Lactose-free milk is currently allowed as part of the reimbursable school meal pursuant to 7 CFR 210.10. School Food Authorities (SFAs) may offer it to children who have lactose intolerance without requiring documentation from a parent, guardian, or medical professional.
- Children with disabilities and who are lactose intolerant require a written statement from a parent, guardian, or medical professional.
- Nondairy beverages that are offered in place of fluid milk must be nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk and should not exceed the fat and sugar content of chocolate-flavored whole milk.
- SFAs must inform the appropriate state agency of any decision to offer a nondairy beverage to students other than those with a disability.
- SFAs cannot charge a higher price for nondairy substitutes and must bear the cost of substitution expenses that exceed Federal meal reimbursements.

*Ms. Hermann specializes in health communications for parents and children. Her articles have appeared in major health, women's, and parenting magazines and websites.*

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