

## 355 Lactose Intolerance

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**Definition/  
cut-off value**

Lactose intolerance occurs when there is an insufficient production of the enzyme lactase. Lactase is needed to digest lactose. Lactose in dairy products that is not digested or absorbed is fermented in the small intestine producing any or all of the following GI disturbances: nausea, diarrhea, abdominal bloating, cramps. Lactose intolerance varies among and within individuals and ranges from mild to severe.

Presence of lactose intolerance diagnosed by a physician as self reported by applicant/participant/caregiver; or as reported or documented by a physician, or someone working under physician's orders; or symptoms must be well documented by the competent professional authority. Documentation should indicate that the ingestion of dairy products causes the above symptoms and the avoidance of such dairy products eliminates them.

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**Participant  
category and  
priority level**

Category	Priority
Pregnant Women	I
Breastfeeding Women	I
Non-Breastfeeding Women	III, IV, V, or VI
Infants	I
Children	III

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**Justification**

Lactose is found primarily in milk, milk-based formula and other dairy products. Dairy products provide a variety of nutrients essential to the WIC population (calcium, vitamin D, protein). Lactose intolerance varies according to individuals. Some individuals may tolerate up to one cup of milk without discomfort, although many avoid dairy products all together. WIC can provide counseling on how to incorporate small amounts of lactose-containing foods and/or other dietary sources of above nutrients into the client's diet.

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**References**

1. Duyff, Roberta Larson: The American Dietetic Association's Complete Food and Nutrition Guide; Chapter 9 Sensitive About Food; 1996; pp. 189-203.
  2. Institute of Medicine: WIC Nutrition Risk Criteria: A Scientific Assessment, 1996; pp.194-195.
  3. American Dietetic Association: Lactose Intolerance Resource Including Recipes; Chicago; 1985.
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