



# Rethink removing dairy

## Good health and nutrition

### Digestive discomfort

Digestive problems are leading people to unnecessarily cut out or limit dairy foods from their diet.

Common digestive complaints include bloating, cramping, gurgling, rumbling, the need to burp and erratic bowel movements. These symptoms can be caused by any number of factors, such as stress, medications, inadequate exercise and food intolerances<sup>1</sup>.

Sometimes we make lifestyle changes without consulting a health professional in an attempt to relieve digestive symptoms. Some make the mistake of assuming dairy foods are the culprit, and limit or cut out dairy food intake.

**By cutting out dairy, we may miss out on essential nutrients health benefits that come from enjoying dairy. This may potentially have negative follow on effects on our future health.**

### Dairy foods for health

#### Health benefits of dairy foods

The dairy food group is made up of milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives. This is one of the five food groups recommended for good health. Not only is the dairy food group a great source of calcium, but it contains other nutrients essential for our wellbeing. Milk, cheese and yoghurt also contain nutrients like protein, riboflavin, vitamin B12, vitamin A, potassium, iodine and phosphorus. The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend consuming milk, cheese and yoghurt everyday as part of a balanced diet to protect us against heart disease, stroke, hypertension and some cancers. Dairy foods also help reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and contribute to stronger bones<sup>2</sup>.

#### Dairy foods in Australian diets

Approximately nine out of 10 Australian adults aren't meeting recommended intake for milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, over 50 per cent of people are failing to get enough calcium in their diets<sup>4</sup>.

1 Bolin, TD and The Gut Foundation. *Understanding Gas and Bloating*. Randwick, NSW: Digestive Diseases Research, 2011.

2 National Health and Medical Research Council. *Australian Dietary Guidelines*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia; 2013.

3 Australian Bureau of Statistics. 4364.0.55.012 – *Australian Health Survey: Consumption of Food Groups from the Australian Dietary Guidelines, 2011–12*. 2016. Available from: [abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.012~2011-](https://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.012~2011-)

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics. 4364.0.55.007 – *Australian Health Survey: Nutrition First Results – Foods and Nutrients, 2011–12*. 2015. Available from: [abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.007~2011-12~Main%20Features~Calcium~714](https://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.007~2011-12~Main%20Features~Calcium~714)

## Reclaim the dairy you love

### 21-day milk-drinking intervention<sup>5</sup>

If you've cut out dairy foods from your diet and want to reintroduce them, try this 21-day intervention. You'll need to gradually reintroduce dairy to build up your tolerance.

#### How to do the 21-day milk challenge

 <b>Week one</b> ½ cup of milk twice a day with meals	 <b>Week two</b> ⅔ cup of milk twice a day with meals	 <b>Week three</b> One cup of milk twice a day with meals
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People who complete this intervention tend to see an improvement in symptoms. They can go on to enjoy milk and other dairy foods as part of their meals and snacks.

## Get balance back in your life

### 'Do dairy differently'

If you are limiting your intake of dairy due to digestive discomfort, these dietary strategies may help. Learn how to 'do dairy differently' to ensure you don't miss out on the health benefits of dairy foods.

#### How to 'Do Dairy Differently'

 Spread your intake of dairy foods over the day	 Have dairy foods with meals	 Have smaller amounts of dairy at a time
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## What about lactose intolerance?

### How is lactose intolerance diagnosed?

It's important to discuss any digestive problems with a health professional such as a general practitioner. They can advise on any tests they need to undertake to confirm lactose intolerance. Remember, digestive problems can be caused by a number of different factors. It's important to avoid self-diagnosing lactose intolerance and eliminating dairy foods from your diet. There may be medical issues or lifestyle factors causing similar symptoms.

### People with lactose intolerance can still enjoy dairy foods

Even for people with diagnosed lactose intolerance, the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend the following:

 Up to 250ml of milk may be well tolerated if it's consumed with other foods or throughout the day	 Most hard cheeses are virtually lactose-free	 Yoghurt contains 'good' bacteria that help to digest lactose	 Lactose-free milks are available and contain similar nutrients to regular milk
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5 O'Connor L, Eaton T, Savaiano D. Improving Milk Intake in Milk-Averse Lactose Digesters and Maldigesters. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*. 2015;47(4):325-330.e1.

#### Disclaimer

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Dairy Australia Limited ABN 60 105 227 987  
E enquiries@dairyaustralia.com.au  
T +61 3 9694 3777  
F +61 3 9694 3701  
dairy.com.au