

As a parent,  
you worry.  
About everything.  
But, one thing you  
probably don't have to  
worry about, is lactose  
intolerance and your child.

Lactose intolerance is less common in young children than in adults, even in minority populations. And, studies have shown that people who have trouble digesting lactose can still keep dairy foods in their diet.\*

### So, what is lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance is one type of food sensitivity. People who are lactose intolerant don't have enough *lactase*, the enzyme that breaks down lactose. Lactose is the sugar found in milk. Symptoms of intolerance may include gas, bloating, stomach cramps and diarrhea.

### Is lactose intolerance a childhood thing?

Not really, although lactase levels may begin to decline in some children by age 3-5. This decline is genetically determined.

Most children with lactase deficiency do not experience symptoms until late-adolescence or adulthood. If your young child is experiencing symptoms, there may be an underlying medical cause, so check with a doctor.

### What do I do about it?

First, if you *suspect* your child has lactose intolerance, discuss it with their doctor. Second, if the diagnosis is lactose intolerance, relax. Your child will probably still be able to consume milk products, which are important for good health. They contain essential nutrients including calcium, vitamin D and protein for bone health and overall growth. Milk products are the preferred source of calcium; supplements and calcium-fortified foods don't supply the complete nutrient package of milk.

# LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

## AND YOUR CHILD



### Can I make living with lactose intolerance easier for my child?

You bet! To find out how, check out the tips below!

■ **Team up!** Research shows that individuals with lactose intolerance can usually drink milk, they just have to drink smaller amounts at a time and with other foods. Solid foods slow down digestion which helps children handle lactose better. So, serve milk with meals. And even with snacks — try the classic combinations of milk and cereal, or milk and cookies.

### ■ Cheese (and calcium) please!

Most cheeses contain only small amounts of lactose. Aged hard cheeses like Cheddar, Colby, Swiss and Parmesan are particularly low in lactose and are easy to digest. They're tasty too, so that should make your child happy!

■ **Yummy options!** Many people find that chocolate milk is easier to digest than white milk and it has the same nutrients as white milk. Plus, yogurts with live active cultures contain "friendly" bacteria that help the body digest lactose.

### ■ You've got friends in the right place!

There's help right at your child's school... in the cafeteria! The cafeteria is a great place to implement many of the dietary strategies mentioned above. Milk is offered with meals and cheese is included on many menu items. Plus, they serve chocolate milk and yogurt and may even provide lactose-free milk for your child! The school cafeteria will also work with you on special diet requests — you just need to provide a signed note from a parent or guardian.

