Lactose Intolerance, Children

Lactose intolerance should not be confused with milk allergy. Infants with lactose intolerance do not have enough of the enzyme lactase to help digest *lactose*. Lactose is a sugar found in milk. In children, this may show up as failure to thrive, diarrhea or cramping and fussiness. This usually shows up in about 1/2 to 2 hours after eating or drinking foods containing lactose.

A milk allergy is an allergy to proteins in milk.

DIAGNOSIS

There are several tests your caregiver can do to make this diagnosis.

TREATMENT

- Lactose-free products may be used.
- Feed your child smaller amounts of milk at one time and more frequently.
- Feed your child milk with other foods. This slows absorption and the child can handle it better.
- Whole milk may be better tolerated (recommended for children under 2 years of age). It is metabolized more slowly than skim milk.
- Less pure milk products like cheese and ice cream may be better tolerated.
- Occasionally, *lactase* (the enzyme) may be given to help digest lactose.

PROGNOSIS

Many children will outgrow lactose intolerance or at least it will get better with age. Some children may get worse. Notify your caregiver of any changes in tolerance.

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