

## **'Every time I eat dairy foods I become ill, could I have a milk allergy.....? '**

Dairy allergy is relatively common in the community. The unpleasant symptoms some people experience after eating dairy foods may be due to: Milk allergy, Milk intolerance or Lactose intolerance

### **What is milk allergy.....?**

Cow's milk allergy occurs when the immune system is activated following the ingestion of milk proteins. Milk is very high in protein and to date twenty-five proteins in milk have been identified as being capable of provoking allergy. Reactions can be very violent, they can occur instantly or within an hour of ingesting of the food.

### **Factors involved in the development of cow's milk allergy:**

- The incidence of allergy occurring in greater if both parents have allergy themselves;
- The amount of cow's milk consumed relative to body weight;
- Frequency of exposure;
- The immaturity of the digestive tract in children may result in an increased absorption of antigens;
- Diet history e.g. formula vs breast feed;
- Health status (presence of digestive)

### **'What are the symptoms of milk allergy.....?'**

Symptoms of dairy allergy can include a life threatening anaphylactic reaction, other symptoms include throat swelling, violent vomiting, diarrhea, asthma, sneezing, rhinitis, sinusitis, angioedema (localised) swelling, redness of the eyes, hives, eczema.

### **How can I find out if I have dairy allergy...?**

Standard testing procedure for milk allergy is a skin prick test or RAST test (blood test). If you know eating dairy foods causes your health problems and it has not shown on allergy testing ... you may have a milk intolerance ....

### **'What is Milk intolerance.....?'**

Milk intolerance or milk sensitivity is more likely to affect a larger number of people than milk allergy. Sensitivities can develop at any time of life and rarely occur if the food is never eaten. Sensitivities can be:

- secondary to taking medications;
- provoked by gastrointestinal disease;
- pharmacological reactions (like side effects of medication) to specific milk components;
- toxic reactions when eaten in excess; or an
- anaphylactoid reaction that mimics true allergy.

Symptoms arising from milk sensitivity are rarely immediate following ingestion of milk, but can be delayed by many days making it difficult to detect.

## **What are the symptoms of milk intolerance...?**

Milk intolerance can cause a wide variety of symptoms that will be influenced by the type of reaction involved. Symptoms can mimic those of milk allergy and can include arthritis, bronchial asthma, hyperactivity, migraine/headaches, eczema, miscellaneous rashes, irritable bowel syndrome, rhinitis, sinusitis, infantile colic, constipation, Crohn's disease.

## **How can I find out if I have milk intolerance?**

Milk intolerance does not show on allergy testing, it can be diagnosed by elimination and challenge procedure. This involves removing milk and milk products from the diet for a period of time then reintroducing it for a test feed to see if it provokes symptoms.

## **'What is lactose intolerance....?'**

Lactose intolerance is an inherited deficiency of the enzyme lactase (or  $\beta$ -galactosidase) in the intestine. As a result of this deficiency, the milk sugar lactose cannot be properly broken down in the gut, it passes into the colon where bacteria break it down and create the characteristic symptoms of lactose intolerance.

## **What are the symptoms of lactose intolerance....?**

Symptoms characteristic of lactose intolerance include bloating, flatulence, abdominal cramping and frothy diarrhoea.

## **How can I find out if I have lactose intolerance**

Lactose Intolerance can be diagnosed by a Lactose Tolerance Test. This involves being challenged with lactose while fasting, at the same time blood glucose levels and symptoms of lactose intolerance are monitored.

For more information about lactose intolerance you can purchase a copy of our booklet '*Some Facts on Lactose Intolerance*'. Send a cheque for Au\$10.00 to ASEHA Qld Inc, price includes postage and packaging.

## **Prevention and Treatment of dairy food disorders.....**

Treatment of milk allergy, milk intolerance and lactose intolerance is based on elimination of milk products such as milk, cheese, ice-cream, cream, milk chocolate, milk-based drinks, bakery products, sweets and processed foods containing milk products. This requires individuals to take responsibility for themselves. However, in order to do this, food labelling must be adequate as there may be hidden sources of dairy products in processed foods, nutritional supplements or medications.

## **Food labelling - what to avoid.....**

Food components on labels that may indicate the presence of dairy products include cow milk protein, butter, buttermilk, caseinate, cheese, cottage cheese, cream curds, whey, custard, non-fat milk, cow's milk solids, milk chocolate, lactalbumin, sodium caseinate, sour cream, lactose,  $\alpha$ -lactoglobulin and  $\beta$  lactoglobulin.

The best way to avoid hidden sources is to purchase fresh whole foods and prepare your own meals. By not purchasing processed foods you can have greater certainty and control over the food you eat.

## **But what can I use instead of cow's milk....?**

Cow's milk can be replaced with water, goat milk, sheep milk, soya milk, nut milks, oat milk, rice

milk, fruit juice. However, some people may also react to goat, sheep and soya milk.

## **Where can I go for help.....?**

If you suspect you have one of the problems outlined and require testing to establish a diagnosis, you need to consult your medical practitioner. If you are having difficulty with elimination and challenge procedures an allergy dietitian may be of assistance.

## **Bibliography**

Klaasen, Curtis D et al Eds. Casarett & Doull's Toxicology: The Basic Science of Poisons. Fifth Ed. McGraw-Hill, NY. 1996

Kotsonis, Frank D et al. Eds. Nutritional Toxicology. Raven Press Ltd. NY, 1994.

Reynolds, James E F Ed. Martindale: The Extra Pharmacopoeia. Thirty-First Ed. Royal Pharmaceutical Society, London. 1996.

Martin, Dr Sharyn, PhD. Is it Really Milk Allergy. Brisbane. 1999.

---

**Written by:**

*ASEHA Qld Inc.*

PO Box 96 Margate Qld 4019

E-mail: [asehaqld@bigpond.com](mailto:asehaqld@bigpond.com)

Website: [www.asehaqld.org.au](http://www.asehaqld.org.au)