

Do people with lactose intolerance need to avoid dairy foods?

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People with lactose intolerance need only avoid lactose intake, not dairy intake. Not all dairy foods contain lactose, or natural milk sugar, and even among those that do, some contain lower levels that may be tolerated by those with milder forms of lactose intolerance. Dairy foods can be either naturally lactose-free, such as small portions of hard, aged cheese, or rendered lactose free through the addition of lactase enzymes to the food during processing in order to "pre-digest" the lactose for you.

Alternatively, supplemental lactase enzyme pills are over-the-counter and available in most pharmacies and can be used to facilitate digestion and absorption of higher-lactose dairy foods that one either cannot - or would rather not - avoid, such as ice cream or pizza.