

# Going Dairy-Free

Before we get into the nitty gritty of what to eat when following a dairy-free diet let's first review the difference between a dairy allergy and a dairy intolerance. Even though the diet for these conditions is the same they are both two distinctly different physiological conditions.

Discovering that you are intolerant or allergic to dairy products can seem like hard news to swallow. **Susie Perry Debye**, Nutritionist from *Life's A Picnic* explains the difference between an allergy and an intolerance and suggest that by making a few easy food swaps you will soon be feeling the benefits of better skin, better digestion and improved energy...

A dairy allergy involves an immune response to one or more of the proteins (albumin, casein or whey) found in cow's milk. So when you consume cow's milk, your immune system identifies these proteins as dangerous and launches an immune response. A dairy allergy can be triggered by a very small amount of the milk protein and the reaction is immediate. Symptoms of a dairy allergy tend to include rapid digestive discomfort such as bloating, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation; skin irritation such as hives, dermatitis or eczema; respiratory issues such as asthma and other inflammatory responses such as headaches or joint pain.

A dairy intolerance is much less severe and can involve a delayed reaction which does not involve the immune system. However the symptoms are similar since digestive disturbances along with skin and inflammatory symptoms tend to be experienced. Dairy intolerance may have various causes, the most common is an inability to digest the milk sugar, lactose due to not being able to produce the milk sugar digesting enzyme lactase. In this instance the milk sugar ferments in the gut and triggers unpleasant gastrointestinal symptoms.

For some people their dairy intolerance is not to do with lactose but is due to an inability to break down the proteins found in milk. Those with an intolerance (compared to those with an allergy) may find they are able to consume small amounts of dairy products with no ill-effects, particularly products like live yoghurt or cottage cheese and some find they can easily tolerate products made from goat, sheep or buffalo milk.

## Clear skin

If you have been battling unexplained and dreaded skin eruptions for some time then it's time to take on the dairy-free challenge. In just three to four weeks on



### Top swaps for dairy-free living

- Dairy product: Swap too
- Cows milk: goats milk, sheeps milk, almond milk, soya milk, coconut milk, rice milk, oat milk
- Cheese: goats cheese, sheeps cheese, buffalo mozzarella, hummus
- Yoghurt: sheeps yoghurt, goats yogurt, soya yoghurt, coconut yoghurt

a strict dairy free diet you'll soon discover if this is going to be a solid resolution for permanent clear skin. Just think how much money you will save on topical skin treatments! The link between the skin and dairy products is still being explored by scientists but there is a general consensus that inflammation in the digestive tract caused by an allergy or intolerance triggers skin inflammation and sensitivity. Take the dairy out of your diet and your digestive tract can recover and your skin will magically start to heal and clear up.

## Healthy digestion

When it comes to digestion our main goal is to extract all the good stuff (vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, proteins, fats and phytonutrients) from the food we eat so we can be in the best possible health. Digestive symptoms of stomach pain, cramps, bloating, flatulence, diarrhoea, nausea and constipation are all tell-tale signs that digestion is not running smoothly and that inflammation may be present. During times of intestinal inflammation the process of releasing and absorbing all the good stuff from our food is disrupted leaving us short of the nutrients we need to maintain optimum health and vitality. Take the dairy out of your diet so your digestive tract can heal and recover and you'll soon be feeling full of energy and vitality as your body is able to soak up the benefits of better digestion again.

## Head space

Many people who suffer from a dairy allergy or intolerance discover that when following a dairy-free diet their brain fog lifts, that they have improved mental focus and clarity, better concentration and that unexplained headaches or migraines seem to become less frequent. Great news if you are feeling the pressures of work or study.

## Calcium check

One of the first concerns that people tend to have when thinking about going dairy-free is if they will be getting enough calcium in their diet. The concept that you can only get enough calcium by consuming dairy products is a myth. Yes milk contains calcium BUT it also contains saturated fats which bind with the calcium in the gut making it hard to absorb. Foods such as nuts, seeds and green leafy vegetables are packed full of calcium and, unlike milk, also contain magnesium which helps the body absorb calcium.

## Healthy living

Antibiotics are given in mass quantities to dairy cows to help prevent infection, but great concern has been raised over the consumption of these antibiotics through the milk supply and antibiotic resistance. Also, there are two hormones in our milk supply: BGH (Bovine Growth Hormone), a natural occurring hormone in cows that stimulates the production of IGF-1 (insulin-like growth factor-1), and a synthetic version, rBGH, used in conventional dairy farming to help stimulate milk production. The consumption of cow's milk increases IGF-1 in humans by 10 per cent and this is linked to a significant increase in the risk of prostate, colon, lung, and breast cancers. Rest assured that plant-based milk alternatives (almond milk, soya milk etc) don't contain antibiotics or hormones.

Whatever your reasons for going dairy-free you can be assured that there are plenty of dairy-free products available in supermarkets, health food shops and farmers markets to make the experience easy and enjoyable and the results for your health, weight, energy, skin and mood will help motivate you to continue.

## Deliciously Dairy-Free!



### Coconut dessert delight

The Coconut Collaborative puts a tasty twist on a freezer favourite with its new range of Snowconut Fro-Yo. Free from dairy, soya, and gluten...but certainly not temptation, each flavour is bursting with life-giving nutrients and is made with the milk of two coconuts. Packed with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, each tub is 100 per cent natural and just like their yoghurts, offers guilt free indulgence (just a little bit colder!). For a more day-to-day dessert swap to the totally Coconut Collaborative range of creamy dairy-free yoghurts. Coconut yoghurt is rich in medium chain triglycerides otherwise known as MCTG's a type of fat that actually helps the body fire-up the metabolism and burn fat!

◆ Snowconut flavours include Vanilla, Raspberry, Chocolate or Mango and cost £4 for 500ml. Coconut yoghurt flavours include Natural, Vanilla, Raspberry, Berries and Seeds or Mango and Passion Fruit cost £1.49 for 120g.



### Nice cup of tea

There's no doubt that us Brits love our cups of tea throughout the day so you might be wondering what hot drink to turn to on a dairy-free diet. Simply swapping your builders brew for a herbal tea is the obvious solution. There are so many great flavours of herbal teas to choose from and the good news is that, unlike normal tea, herbal teas come with additional health benefits. For instance fennel tea is good for indigestion, netted tea helps with water retention, ginger and lemon improves detoxification and peppermint is a great digestive tonic. We particularly love the Mint tea from Prince and Sons as this is a clever blend of cooling peppermint and sweet spearmint which means it's actually pretty refreshing.

◆ Prince and Sons Mint Tea costs £4.45 for 15 bags.



### Chocolate heaven

If you are worrying about what you will replace your favourite dairy milk chocolate treat with - then don't! You'll be amazed at the variety and quality of 'healthier' raw chocolate treats available. I particularly love a new range called Sweet Virtue which combine raw chocolate (naturally rich in stress busting magnesium) with super foods such as maqui berry, lucuma and maca with bio live probiotic cultures. These magical ingredients provide a great source of antioxidants and the probiotic spores are good for digestive health, a great way to satisfy a sweet tooth while sticking to your dairy-free diet!

◆ Sweet Virtue Maqui Berry Chocolate Truffles cost £13.95.