# Experts warn of undiagnosed lactose intolerance as Easter approaches



As Easter approaches, health experts are warning that many individuals may unknowingly be affected by lactose intolerance, often referred to as having an 'anti-chocolate gene'. Dr Yiannis Mavrommatis, a nutrigenetics expert at MyHealthChecked, highlighted that approximately 8% of adults in the UK are living with undiagnosed lactose intolerance, which can lead to uncomfortable symptoms such as diarrhoea, nausea, and abdominal bloating.

The gene in question, scientifically known as MCM6, regulates lactase production in the body. Dr Mavrommatis explained that while lactase activity is typically high during infancy for milk digestion, it diminishes over time. “Biologically, lactose intolerance is the norm," he stated. "The main symptoms of lactose intolerance are diarrhoea, abdominal bloating and/or pain, nausea and vomiting, and flatulence. What may surprise people, however, is the timing of the manifestation of such symptoms," he added, noting that as lactase activity decreases with age, many may only develop symptoms later in life.

He further elaborated that the severity of symptoms often correlates with the amount of dairy consumed, with some individuals able to tolerate small quantities of lactose without adverse effects. For those wishing to determine their lactose tolerance, MyHealthChecked offers an Intolerances and Sensitivities DNA Test, which can identify the presence of the MCM6 gene through a simple cheek swab.

One individual, Jack, 26, from Swansea, shared his experience with lactose intolerance following COVID-19. Despite initial blood tests revealing no concerns, he suspected an intolerance and opted for the DNA test, which confirmed a medium level of lactose intolerance. Jack has made several dietary adjustments, such as switching to almond or lactose-free milk for his coffee. He stated, “The changes have had a subtle but positive effect,” noting that he feels more settled by the end of the day. Jack intends to apply a similar strategy during Easter by making dietary swaps to enjoy chocolate treats without discomfort.

Isabela Ramos, a nutritionist at MyHealthChecked, provided additional insights, stating that certain types of chocolate, especially dark chocolate with high cocoa content, may have minimal lactose and could be tolerated by some individuals with lactose intolerance. She suggested that alternatives such as dairy-free chocolate eggs, vegan truffles, and dairy-free ice creams can help those avoiding lactose enjoy traditional Easter treats.

To manage symptoms, Isabela also recommended the use of lactase enzyme supplements prior to consuming lactose-containing foods. Moreover, she emphasised the importance of maintaining a healthy gut microbiome, which can play a role in improving lactose digestion. “A healthy and diverse gut microbiome is essential for optimal digestive function,” she explained, suggesting a plant-rich diet that includes various fruits and vegetables to promote gut health.

As Easter looms, individuals who may be affected by lactose intolerance are encouraged to consider their dietary choices, especially regarding the rich array of seasonal chocolate treats.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://milk.co.uk/milk-nutrition/lactose-lowdown/> - This article supports the claim that lactose intolerance is relatively common and mentions the symptoms associated with it, such as bloating and diarrhea. It also notes that individuals can often manage symptoms by consuming small amounts of lactose or using lactose-free products.
* <https://metabolicsupportuk.org/condition/lactose-intolerance/> - This resource explains the prevalence and types of lactose intolerance, including primary and secondary types, and discusses symptoms and management strategies. It also highlights that lactose intolerance is common globally.
* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/6693044/> - This study provides data on the prevalence of lactase deficiency in British adults, which supports the idea that lactose intolerance can affect a significant portion of the population, though it varies by ethnicity.
* <https://www.myhealthchecked.com> - Although not directly cited in your search results, this URL is relevant to the article as it relates to genetic testing for lactose intolerance, specifically the MCM6 gene, as mentioned by Dr. Yiannis Mavrommatis. However, searching this URL does not provide additional validation of the claim, but it is associated with the services described.
* <https://www.health.gov.uk/gut-health> - This URL is hypothetical as it was not directly provided in the search results, but it would relate to maintaining a healthy gut microbiome, a concept discussed in the article as beneficial for lactose digestion.