

# LIFE → after ← DAIRY

Cutting dairy out of your diet doesn't have to be difficult or expensive. Nutritional therapist and natural chef *Alessandra Felice* looks at what alternatives are out there

*An increasing number of people* are choosing to cut dairy out of their diet and this means that in recent years supermarket shelves have become laden with free-from alternatives such as soya milk, oat cream and almond yoghurt. This is good news if you have discovered that you – or a member of your family – have a dairy intolerance or allergy and means that with just a few tweaks, you can still eat the same dishes as usual.

## INTOLERANCE VS ALLERGIES

If you're thinking of changing your diet because of digestive issues, it's useful to know the difference between dairy intolerance and dairy allergy.

Lactase, the enzyme in the body that breaks down lactose in milk, begins to naturally deplete after the age of three as we are genetically programmed to no longer be dependent on our mother's milk, and lactase deficiency in later years can lead to lactose intolerance. Symptoms include loose stools, diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, runny nose, watery eyes and skin rashes, as well as colic in babies.

This intolerance is different from an allergy as allergies generate an immune response. For instance, if you have an allergy to cows' milk, your immune system will identify it as an invader or allergen and overreact by producing antibodies called ImmunoglobulinE (IgE). These antibodies travel to cells that release chemicals, causing a reaction. Symptoms of allergies appear as



hives, itchiness, swelling, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Unlike a food intolerance where people can eat small amounts of that ingredient without it creating too many problems, food allergies can cause a serious (sometimes life-threatening) reaction even just by eating only a tiny amount, touching or inhaling the food.

## ALTERNATIVES TO MILK

Nowadays, being allergic or intolerant to milk doesn't have to mean a total diet change, as there are a variety of dairy-free alternatives available. I've listed a few products that can be used in place of cows' milk below.

**SOYA MILK:** Made with ground soy beans, this is one

