

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE IN ADULT PEOPLE: CORRELATION BETWEEN CLINICAL FEATURES REPORTED BEFORE BREATH TEST, SYMPTOMS DEVELOPED AFTER ORAL INGESTION OF 25 G LACTOSE AND RESULTS OF LACTOSE BREATH TESTING

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UEG Week Copenhagen 2023

Poster

Small Intestine & Nutrition

October 15, 2023

A prospective study of 68 adults undergoing hydrogen breath testing found that pre-test symptoms were not associated with lactose malabsorption, while bloating and diarrhoea developing or worsening during the test were predictive of lactose intolerance.

KEY POINTS

- Among 68 patients tested with hydrogen breath test using 25 g lactose, 59% tested positive for lactose malabsorption and 65% of those who developed symptoms met criteria for lactose intolerance.
- Pre-test symptoms showed no association with lactose malabsorption or intolerance, with only 40% of patients reporting pre-test symptoms having confirmed malabsorption.
- Abdominal bloating during the test was significantly associated with positive breath test results (73% versus 43%, $p=0.02$), and worsening of bloating was predictive of lactose intolerance with 80% positive predictive value.
- Diarrhoea during testing was the most predictive symptom of lactose intolerance with positive predictive value up to 88%, and an increasing number of symptoms during the test correlated with lactose malabsorption.
- Adding methane measurement to standard hydrogen analysis identified 10 additional patients with lactose intolerance who may have been missed by hydrogen measurement alone.

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