

# Galactose

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**Galactose** (from the Greek stem γάλακτ– *galakt–*, "milk"), sometimes abbreviated **Gal**, is a monosaccharide sugar that is less sweet than glucose. It is a C-4 epimer of glucose.

**Galactan** is a polymer of the sugar galactose found in hemicellulose. Galactan can be converted to galactose by hydrolysis.

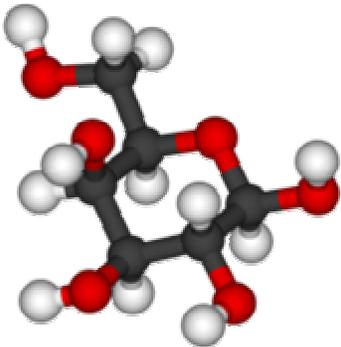
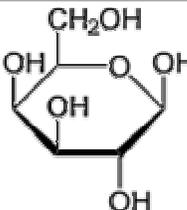
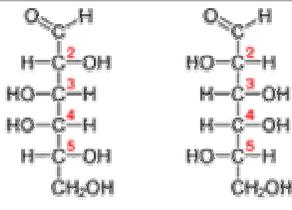
## Contents

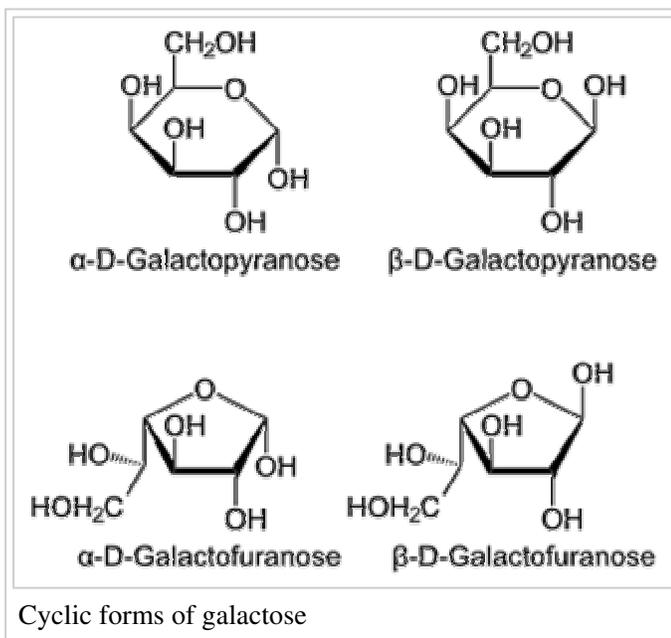
- 1 Structure and isomerism
- 2 Relationship to lactose
- 3 Metabolism
- 4 Sources
- 5 Clinical significance
- 6 See also
- 7 References

## Structure and isomerism

Galactose exists in both open-chain and cyclic form. The open-chain form has a carbonyl at the end of the chain. In the open-chain form D- and L- isomers cannot be separated, but the cyclic forms can be crystallized and isolated.<sup>[1]</sup>

Four isomers are cyclic, two of them with a pyranose (six-membered) ring, two with a furanose (five-membered) ring. Galactofuranose occurs in bacteria, fungi and protozoa.<sup>[2]</sup> In the cyclic form there are two anomers, named alpha and beta, since the transition from the open-chain form to the cyclic form involves the creation of a new stereocenter at the site of the open-chain carbonyl. In the beta form, the alcohol group is in the equatorial position, whereas in the alpha form, the alcohol group is in the axial position.<sup>[1]</sup>

Galactose	
	
	
<b>Identifiers</b>	
CAS number	59-23-4 <span style="color: red;">✖</span>
PubChem	439357
ChemSpider	388480 <span style="color: green;">✔</span>
UNII	X2RN3Q8DNE <span style="color: green;">✔</span>
KEGG	D04291 <span style="color: red;">✖</span>
MeSH	Galactose
ChEBI	CHEBI:28061 <span style="color: green;">✔</span>
ChEMBL	CHEMBL300520 <span style="color: red;">✖</span>
ATC code	[[ATC code {V04I{V04}}]CE01 ( <a href="http://www.whocc.no/atc_ddd_index/?code={V04CE01},V08DA02">http://www.whocc.no/atc_ddd_index/?code={V04CE01},V08DA02</a> (microparticles))
Jmol-3D images	Image 1 ( <a href="http://chemapps.stolaf.edu/jmol/jmol.php?model=O%5BC%40H%5D1%5BC%40H%5D%28O%29%5BC%40H%5D%28O%5BC%40H%5D%28O%29%5BC%40H%5D1O%29CO">http://chemapps.stolaf.edu/jmol/jmol.php?model=O%5BC%40H%5D1%5BC%40H%5D%28O%29%5BC%40H%5D%28O%5BC%40H%5D%28O%29%5BC%40H%5D1O%29CO</a> )
<b>SMILES</b>	
<b>InChI</b>	
<b>Properties</b>	
Molecular formula	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>12</sub> O <sub>6</sub>



Molar mass	180.156 g mol <sup>-1</sup>
Density	1.723 g/cm <sup>3</sup>
Melting point	167 °C; 333 °F; 440 K
Solubility in water	683.0 g/L
<b>Hazards</b>	
NFPA 704	
<b>X</b> (verify) (what is: <span style="color: green;">✓</span> / <span style="color: red;">✗</span> ?)	
Except where noted otherwise, data are given for materials in their standard state (at 25 °C (77 °F), 100 kPa)	
Infobox references	

## Relationship to lactose

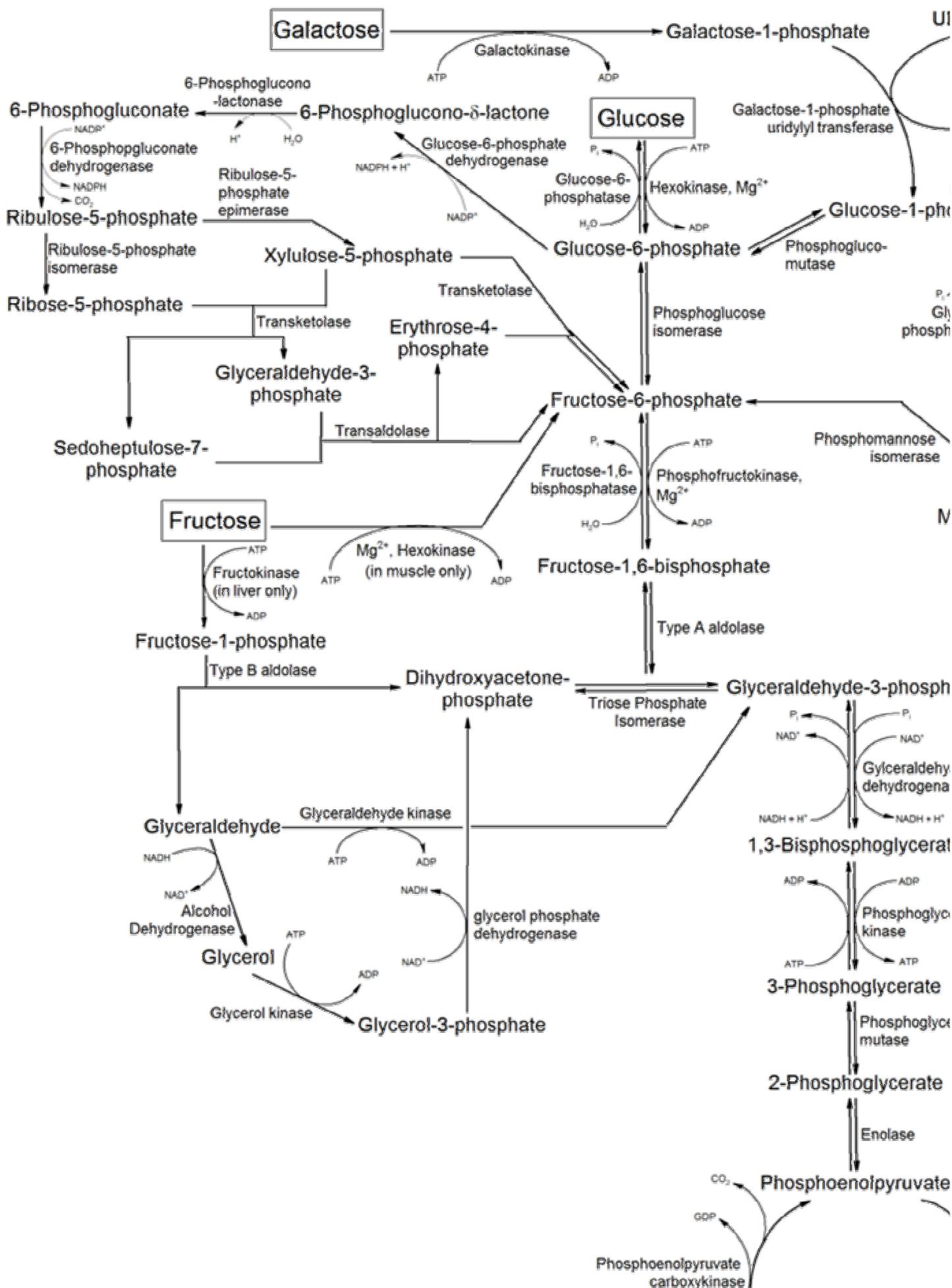
Galactose is a monosaccharide. When combined with glucose (monosaccharide), through a condensation reaction, the result is the disaccharide lactose. The hydrolysis of lactose to glucose and galactose is catalyzed by the enzymes lactase and  $\beta$ -galactosidase. The latter is produced by the *lac* operon in *Escherichia coli*.

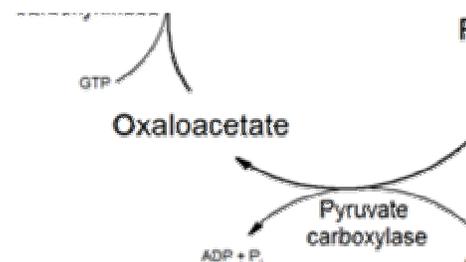
In nature, lactose is found primarily in milk and milk products. Consequently, various food products made with dairy-derived ingredients, e.g. breads and cereals, can contain lactose.<sup>[3]</sup> Galactose metabolism, which converts galactose into glucose, is carried out by the three principal enzymes in a mechanism known as the Leloir pathway. The enzymes are listed in the order of the metabolic pathway: galactokinase (GALK), galactose-1-phosphate uridylyltransferase (GALT), and UDP-galactose-4'-epimerase (GALE).

In the human body, glucose is changed into galactose via hexoneogenesis to enable the mammary glands to secrete lactose. However, most lactose in breast milk is synthesized from galactose taken up from the blood, and only 35±6% is made from galactose from *de novo* synthesis.<sup>[4]</sup> Glycerol also contributes some to the mammary galactose production.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Metabolism

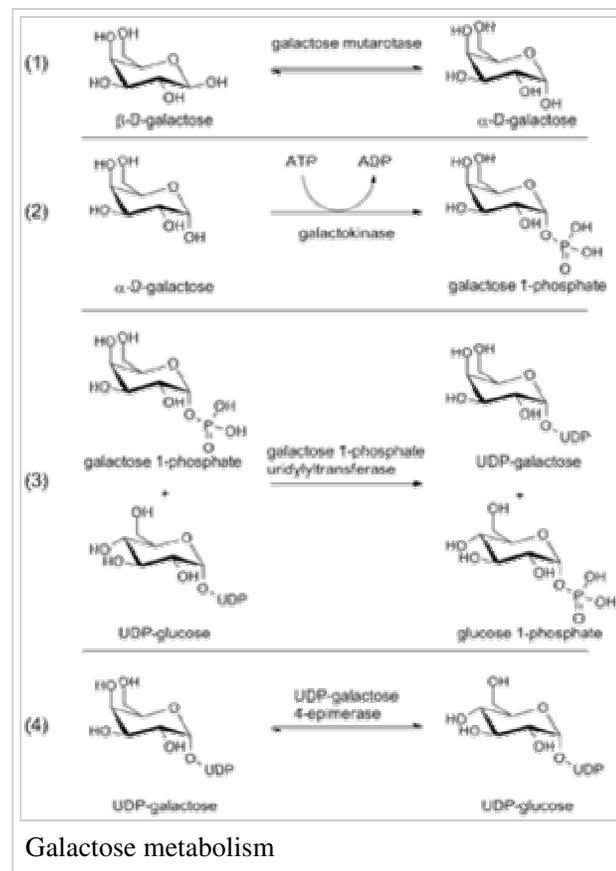
### Metabolism of common monosaccharides and some biochemical reactions o





Glucose is the primary metabolic fuel for humans. It is more stable than galactose and is less susceptible to the formation of nonspecific glycoconjugates, molecules with at least one sugar attached to a protein or lipid. Many speculate that it is for this reason that a pathway for rapid conversion from galactose to glucose has been highly conserved among many species.<sup>[6]</sup>

The main pathway of galactose metabolism is the Leloir pathway; humans and other species, however, have been noted to contain several alternate pathways, such as the De Ley Doudoroff pathway. The Leloir pathway consists of the latter stage of a two-part process that converts  $\beta$ -D-galactose to UDP-glucose. The initial stage is the conversion of  $\beta$ -D-galactose to  $\alpha$ -D-galactose by the enzyme, mutarotase (GALM). The Leloir pathway then carries out the conversion of  $\alpha$ -D-galactose to UDP-glucose via three principle enzymes. Galactokinase (GALK) phosphorylates  $\alpha$ -D-galactose to galactose-1-phosphate, or Gal-1-P. Galactose-1-phosphate uridylyltransferase (GALT) then transfers a UMP group from UDP-glucose to Gal-1-P to form UDP-galactose. Finally, UDP galactose-4'-epimerase (GALE) interconverts UDP-galactose and UDP-glucose, thereby completing the pathway.<sup>[7]</sup>



However, those suffering from galactosemia cannot properly break down galactose as the result of a genetically inherited mutation in one of the enzymes in the Leloir pathway. These individuals cannot break down galactose properly, so the consumption of even small amounts of galactose is harmful to galactosemics.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Sources

Galactose is found in dairy products, sugar beets, other gums and mucilages. It is also synthesized by the body, where it forms part of glycolipids and glycoproteins in several tissues; and is a by-product from the third-generation ethanol production process (from macroalgae).

## Clinical significance

Chronic systemic exposure of mice, rats, and *Drosophila* to D-galactose causes the acceleration of senescence (aging) and has been used as an aging model.<sup>[9]</sup> Two studies have suggested a possible link between galactose in milk and ovarian cancer.<sup>[10][11]</sup> Other studies show no correlation, even in the presence of defective galactose metabolism.<sup>[12][13]</sup> More recently, pooled analysis done by the Harvard School of Public Health showed no specific correlation between lactose-containing foods and ovarian cancer, and showed statistically insignificant increases in risk for consumption of lactose at  $\geq 30$  g/d.<sup>[14]</sup> More research is necessary to ascertain possible risks.

Some ongoing studies suggest galactose may have a role in treatment of focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (a kidney disease resulting in kidney failure and proteinuria).<sup>[15]</sup> This effect is likely to be a result of binding of galactose to FSGS factor.<sup>[16]</sup>

Galactose is a component of the antigens present on blood cells that determine blood type within the ABO blood group system. In O and A antigens, there are two monomers of galactose on the antigens, whereas in the B antigens there are three monomers of glucose.<sup>[17]</sup>

Alpha-1,3-galactose, or Alpha-Gal for short, has been recognised as a delayed allergy to mammal meat, affecting a growing number of the population. This allergy is initially caused by a tick bite. An Alpha-Gal Allergy Awareness (AGAA) team has been formed to help educate the public and increase awareness about this allergy in the food service industry.<sup>[18]</sup>

## See also

- Galactolysis

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