

When cow's milk allergy is suspected in a breast fed baby



Information on a milk free diet when breastfeeding

Cow's Milk Allergy

You have been given this leaflet as your baby might have an allergy to cow's milk.

Cow's Milk Allergy (CMA) can appear in different ways but is suspected if your baby has been troubled with one or more of the following symptoms:

- Large or frequent vomits (and reflux has been ruled out)
- Loose, frequent stools or even constipation
- Unexplained irritability or sore crying for long periods
- Skin rash or eczema
- Problematic wheezing, shortness of breath, nasal congestion.

What to do now

If you are breastfeeding and your baby is not on solids yet then you should now remove cow's milk from your diet for 6 weeks to see if there is an improvement in your baby's symptoms. You must do this strictly as even small amounts of cow's milk proteins will travel through your breast milk to your baby.

It will take 10-14 days for all the cow's milk protein to come out of your breast milk. If you can express breast milk over the first 3-4 days of starting the milk free diet, and freeze it, this can be used for a future milk challenge. Do not worry if you can't express milk as you can do the milk challenge in other ways (see milk challenge section).

Food to avoid & food to choose

Please find a list of foods in the following table you can include in your diet and foods to avoid.

Food Group	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Dairy Products	Milk substitutes such as oat, soya, coconut, almond, hazelnut milk	Cow's, goat's, sheep's milk and all products made with these
	Soya milkshakes	
	Soya yoghurt and desserts	Yoghurts and yoghurt smoothies
	Coconut, oat & almond based yogurt	
	Soya or coconut based, non-dairy cheese incl. soft spread	Hard, soft and cream cheese ie cheddar, mozzarella

	Dairy free margarine and spread	Butter and margarine
	Dairy free ice-cream	Ice-cream
	Soya/Oatly cream	Cream

It is important to always check food labels for hidden sources. Please note due to food and drink labelling/ packaging regulations all food packaging must clearly state if the product contains milk products. Milk will be written in bold.

Calcium

When breastfeeding, it is advisable to choose calcium enriched products as your calcium requirements are particularly high during this time. Your body needs **1250mg of Calcium** per day. To help achieve this it is important to use a calcium enriched milk free alternative and include non-dairy sources of calcium ie tinned fish such as sardines and pilchards, bread, green vegetables, dried fruit such as apricots and tinned beans such as baked beans or kidney beans. See the table below for the calcium content of milk alternatives.

Milk Alternative	Calcium Content (mg)
Calcium enriched soya milk (200mls)	265
Calcium enriched oat milk (200mls)	240
Calcium enriched almond milk (200mls)	240
Calcium enriched coconut milk (200mls)	240
Carton Soya Shake (250mls)	300
Pot Soya Yoghurt, custard, dessert (125g)	150

If you cannot meet this through your diet then you can buy an over the counter calcium supplement to meet this need. Speak with your pharmacist for advice. Remember that all breastfeeding mums need to take a supplement of vitamin D daily (10µg daily). Some calcium supplements will also contain vitamin D so you can stop your extra vitamin D supplement if the calcium supplement contains 10µg vitamin D.

If your baby has started weaning (solids)

If your baby did not have any symptoms of a cow's milk allergy when they were only taking breast milk then **you do not need to remove cow's milk from your diet.**

You should then only remove cow's milk from your baby's diet. This should be done for 4 weeks.

For information on milk free weaning please find our milk free weaning video at:

<https://youtu.be/E8w6M6QN9hg>

What to do after the milk free trial is over

Once your baby has been milk free for 4 weeks (this will be 6 weeks after you start avoiding milk whilst breastfeeding) if there is no improvement in your baby's symptoms then you should see the health visitor. They may advise you to return to your normal diet. However if your baby's symptoms are getting worse then they may refer them to the dietitian at this time.

Many babies have difficulty settling and feeding at some point, especially in the early weeks after birth therefore, if your baby's symptoms do improve then you must do a milk challenge (reintroduce cow's milk) to confirm the diagnosis of CMPA.

How to do a milk challenge

If your baby has had severe or immediate reactions to milk such as anaphylaxis, lip or facial swelling or wheeze, DO NOT do a milk challenge at home.

- Once your baby has been milk free for around 6 weeks, they should start the milk challenge. This will give time for all symptoms to completely settle down. If your baby is not well at this time or has just had a vaccination, then wait a few days or until they feel well again.
- If your baby is breastfeeding only (no food/ solids) then you can use frozen breast milk that was expressed prior to starting the milk free diet (or during the first 3-4 days of starting it). Give 30ml (1oz) on day 1, 60ml (2oz) on day 2 and increase daily by 30ml (1oz) until they are taking 1 full bottle of expressed breast milk daily. If there is no reaction after this you can start to reintroduce milk back in to your diet.
- If you do not have any frozen expressed breast milk suitable for doing a challenge then you can start to reintroduce milk back in to your diet and monitor your baby's response.
- If your baby has started solids then you can reintroduce milk back in to their diet and monitor symptoms over 7-10 days.

If after completing the milk challenge there is no return of symptoms then you can rule out a milk allergy. Symptoms often return quickly but can sometimes be delayed. If symptoms do return over time speak with your health visitor.

If symptoms do return then this confirms a cow's milk allergy. Please let your baby's Health Visitor know and they will refer your baby to the paediatric dietitian.

Dietitian Input

When a milk allergy is confirmed (as above) you will be referred to the paediatric dietitian who will provide further information and advice on cow's milk allergy and how to manage it. Most babies will remain on a milk free diet until they are 1 year old or for at least 6 months following the diagnosis.

You will be offered to attend a milk free weaning group with the dietitian in the first instance.

You will then be offered milk reintroduction advice at the appropriate age.

Contact Details for paediatric dietitian:

fv.childrensdiet@nhs.scot

01324 566626