

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

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 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

Your baby should now go on a milk free diet for 4 weeks as it can take this long for symptoms to fully clear up. Your baby's GP Practice will prescribe a specialist formula milk, usually an extensively hydrolysed formula, which means the proteins are broken down in the feed, reducing the risk of an allergic reaction.

Extensively hydrolysed formula smells and tastes different to standard formula milk. If your baby has difficulty accepting the new prescribed formula, you can gradually introduce it by mixing it with the formula you are currently using as below:

- Try mixing the new prescribed and current formula half and half ie make up 90ml (3oz) of the new formula and mix with 90ml (3oz) of the current formula to make up a 180ml (6oz) bottle
- If above is still not accepted then start by adding only 30ml (1oz) of the new prescribed formula to the current formula and reduce the current formula by 30ml (1oz) ie if you are making a 180ml (6oz) bottle then you can add 30ml (1oz) of the new prescribed formula to 150ml (5oz) of the current formula
- Then slowly increase the new prescribed formula by 30ml (1oz) at a time until baby is used to the taste. This may take a few days.

Points to note

- The colour of your baby's poo may change with the new formula, this is normal. It is common for it to turn green.
- If your baby is using thickeners or medication for reflux, you should continue to use these
- If your baby is currently on a pre thickened formula then it is likely that a thickener will be needed for the new formula
- Soya milk based formulas are not recommended in babies under 6 month old.
- If symptoms worsen during the 4 week trial period contact your baby's health visitor for advice.

If your baby has started weaning (solids)

If your baby is also on solid food then cow's milk should also be removed from their diet 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 4 week milk free trial is over

If after 4 weeks on a milk free diet there is no improvement in your baby's symptoms then you should see the health visitor.

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 you must do a milk challenge (reintroduce cow's milk) to confirm the diagnosis of CMA.

After around 6 weeks of starting the new formula, you 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 and then begin.

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.

- Start by adding 30ml (1oz) of standard formula milk in to your baby's bottle of new prescribed formula milk in **the first bottle of the day only**. You will have to reduce the amount of new prescribed milk you are making up by 30ml (1oz) also.
- Increase this by 30ml (1oz) of standard formula milk each day, in **the first bottle only**, until all the formula in the first bottle is your baby's standard formula milk.
- Continue to give all the other bottles in the day as the new prescribed formula milk.
- Once your baby is tolerating 1 full bottle of standard formula milk a day then you can now give all bottles as standard formula milk

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 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

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