

Special formulas for treatment of cow's milk allergy – What to expect

There are two common types of special formulas for bottle fed infants with cow's milk protein allergy (CMPA)

- 1. Extensively hydrolysed formulas** e.g. Althera, Nutramigen LGG 1 (made from cow's milk, but the proteins which cause a reaction are broken down into smaller pieces). These are the first treatment for CMPA, suitable for 9 out of 10 babies who react to cow's milk.
- 2. Amino acid formulas** e.g. Alfamino, Neocate LCP (made of the individual building blocks of proteins called amino acids). These are suitable for very sensitive babies (1 out of 10) who react to extensively hydrolysed formulas.

These formulas all have an unusual taste and smell. They may look more watery, or a slightly different colour from your normal formula.

Important tips for using these formulas

- always make the formula up using the instructions on the packet. Do not add more or less scoops than recommended
- don't be put off by the smell or taste. Babies tolerate the taste very well as they have a different sense of smell and taste to you.

For those older babies (over 3-4 months), you can gradually introduce the new formula to get them used to the taste (do not do this if your child has had a severe reaction to standard formula – switch straight away).

DAY	RECIPE FOR A 4OZ (120ML) BOTTLE
0	4 scoops normal infant formula + 120mls (4oz) water
1	3 scoops normal infant formula + 1 scoop special formula + 120mls (4oz) water
2	2 scoops normal infant formula + 2 scoops special formula + 120mls (4oz) water
3	1 scoop normal infant formula + 3 scoops special formula + 120mls (4oz) water
4	4 scoops special formula + 120mls (4oz) water

If you are still having difficulties getting your child to drink the special formula, contact your GP or paediatric dietitian

What to expect when you switch over to the special formula

1. It often takes a few weeks for symptoms to resolve after you have swapped formulas – but let your GP know if your child's symptoms are not improving after a fortnight
2. These special formulas can turn your child's poo darker (sometimes greenish). The amount and consistency of the poo may also change - this is normal
3. These formulas are only available on prescription from your GP. You cannot buy them in the pharmacy or supermarket. For this reason, you need to make sure you request a repeat prescription in plenty of time, so you don't run out.

Stepping down from an amino acid formula to an extensively hydrolysed formula

Some babies who are given amino acid formulas as a first treatment will be able to tolerate extensively hydrolysed formulas once their symptoms have resolved.

Research suggests CMPA babies who are treated with extensively hydrolysed formulas grow out of their milk allergy sooner. This is because the small protein pieces interact with the immune system and help the body get used to milk proteins. Amino acid formulas do not contain these protein pieces and so can't help the body get used to milk again.

How to step down

1. Only step down to an extensively hydrolysed formula if advised to do so by a health professional
2. Choose a time when your baby is well
3. Make up bottles as per the plan below to introduce the new formula gradually
4. If symptoms reoccur, go back to the amino acid formula and talk to your doctor

DAY	RECIPE FOR A 4OZ (120ML) BOTTLE
0	4 scoops amino acid formula + 120mls (4oz) water
1	3 scoops amino acid formula + 1 scoop extensively hydrolysed formula + 120mls (4oz) water
2	2 scoops amino acid formula + 2 scoops extensively hydrolysed formula + 120mls (4oz) water
3	1 scoop amino acid formula + 3 scoops extensively hydrolysed formula + 120mls (4oz) water
4	4 scoops extensively hydrolysed formula + 120mls (4oz) water

When will your GP stop your prescription of special formula?

1. If the special formula is not improving your child's symptoms
2. If your child is under a year and has grown out of their milk allergy, you can move them onto standard formula
3. At 1 year of age, if your child still has a milk allergy, you can move them onto Alpro Soya Growing Up Milk
4. At 2 years of age, if your child still has a milk AND soya allergy, you can move them onto a supermarket oat or nut milk (calcium fortified)

What advice should I receive?

You should be told:

- what special formula to use, and for how long
- what foods and drinks to avoid in weaning
- alternative sources of nutrition to meet your baby's needs
- when, where and how a milk challenge will happen

You should be referred to a dietitian for advice. The dietitian may invite you to a weaning talk in a local children's centre rather than an appointment at the hospital.

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