

# INITIAL COW'S MILK FREE DIETARY ADVICE FOR BREASTFEEDING MUMS

You have been asked to trial your child on a strict cow's milk free diet.

All mammalian milks eg goat, sheep or camel milks behave in a similar way to cow's milk proteins and should not be used as an alternative

As your child is breastfeeding, you will need to make sure your own diet is completely free of cow's milk. This is because traces of cow's milk protein can pass to your child through your breast milk. Trialling a cow's milk free diet will help your doctor decide if any of your child's symptoms are caused by a reaction to cow's milk (cow's milk protein allergy). If symptoms are due to a milk allergy, they will usually improve within two weeks of starting a strict milk free diet. Whilst we ask you to remove cow's milk from your diet, you can use soya replacements. However we don't recommend you increase your soya intake by a large amount due to the small possibility of soya causing a similar reaction in your child.

If restricting your diet is making breastfeeding unsustainable for you, you need urgent support. Please contact your health visitor for referral to a specialist infant feeding advisor, and ask your GP to refer you urgently to the paediatric dietitians for dietary help.

FOODS TO AVOID	MILK FREE BRANDS
Cows milk (and milks from other animals e.g. goat / sheep)	Calcium-fortified milk alternatives made from soya / rice / oats / coconut
Cheese (including goat, sheep and buffalo cheeses)	Soya / rice / coconut cheese
Yoghurt / fromage frais	Soya / coconut / pea yoghurts
Butter or margarine	Vegetable oil / soya spreads
Cream / ice-cream / custard	Soya / oat cream, soya / oat / rice / coconut ice cream, soya custard, some fruit sorbet brands
Chocolate	Soya chocolate

## Hidden sources of cow's milk

Milk is used as an ingredient in many pre-packaged food and drinks. Common items which may contain milk include: **bread, biscuits, processed meat and fish, crisps, breakfast cereals, sweets and ready meals**. Any packaged food made in the UK or Europe must include milk in the list of ingredients if it has been used in the product. Do not eat or drink any item which lists milk as an ingredient.

## Checking labels

It is important to read the food ingredient label carefully before eating any packaged food or drink. Check the ingredients list for any of the following: **butter, casein, cheese, cow's milk, cream, curd, evaporated milk, fromage frais, ghee, ice cream, lactoglobulin / lactoalbumin, lactose, margarine, milk solids, skimmed milk powder, whey, yoghurt**.

Lactose-free food and drinks (e.g. Lactofree products) still contain cow's milk protein. **Do not eat or drink these products.**

Watch out for foods from delicatessen counters or in-store bakeries. These are not pre-packaged, and therefore don't need to be labelled with ingredients. They also have a high risk of contamination with other products, even if they do not deliberately contain milk as an ingredient.

## Don't forget calcium!

AGE	DAILY CALCIUM NEEDS
18-50 years (women)	700mg
Breastfeeding mums	1250mg (extra 550mg daily)

Milk products provide most of the calcium in our diet. Breastfeeding mums need significantly more calcium in their diet. While you are on a cow's milk free diet, you will need to eat lots of other sources of calcium, or take a calcium supplement.

COMMON MILK ALTERNATIVES	CALCIUM CONTENT
100mls calcium fortified soya / rice / oat / coconut milk	120mg
125g pot calcium fortified soya yoghurt/dessert	150mg
100mls calcium fortified soya custard	120mg

It is a quite a challenge to eat enough calcium containing milk free foods to meet your needs during breastfeeding, and you may well need an additional supplement.

Your GP can prescribe one e.g.:

- **to chew:** 2 Adcal chewable fruit flavour tablets (contain 600mg Calcium each)
- **to drink:** one Sandocal 1000 orange flavour effervescent tablet (contain 1000mg calcium each)
- **to swallow:** 4 Calcium Lactate tablets (contain 300mg calcium each)

All breastfeeding women should be on a vitamin D supplement of 10mcg a day, which can be found in regular breast feeding vitamins.

## Frequently asked questions

### Can I eat foods labelled with 'may contain traces of milk' or 'made in a factory that handles milk'?

Some manufacturers use these terms to tell the consumer that the food could have been contaminated with milk during production. The risk of milk proteins from these foods passing to your child through your breast milk is very low. Ask your doctor or dietitian if you are not sure whether to include these foods in your diet.

### My child is moving on from breastfeeding – which infant formula should I use?

Standard formulas available to buy in the shops (including lactose free formulas) all contain cow's milk protein and are not suitable for infants with cow's milk protein allergy. You will need to get a special formula (called an 'extensively hydrolysed', or 'amino acid' formula) on prescription from your GP. These formulas have been broken down so the proteins cannot cause an allergic reaction.

*This diet sheet is designed to give short term advice on a milk free diet. If you or your child need to remain on a milk free diet, you should be referred to a dietitian for further advice.*

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

© Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust

Designed by Graphics (Print & Design), RD&E