

Parent Guide to Cow's Milk Protein Allergy in the Under 2s

Your doctor has diagnosed your child with a cow's milk protein allergy (CMPA). This happens when your child's immune system reacts to the proteins in cow's milk.

Babies with CMPA will usually have a reaction after drinking standard infant formulas. These are all made from cow's milk. Rarely, in some sensitive breastfed infants, proteins from milk in Mum's diet pass to the baby through the breast milk and cause a reaction.

Older children who are eating solid foods may also react to foods containing cow's milk e.g. cheese, butter, yoghurt, ice cream.

Different reactions to cow's milk

Some children have immediate reactions to milk (called **IgE mediated reactions**). These usually happen within a few minutes of eating/drinking cow's milk. Typical immediate reactions include a red itchy rash on the face or body (like nettles rash), swelling of the eyes or lips or vomiting. Rarely some children have difficulty breathing.

More children have delayed reactions to milk (called **non-IgE mediated reactions**). These can happen several hours or days after eating/drinking cow's milk. Typical delayed reactions include reflux, very loose poo, blood or mucus in the poo, or a flare of eczema.

Some children can have both immediate and delayed reactions.

YOUR CHILD HAS:

- an immediate (IgE mediated) reaction to cow's milk
- a delayed (non-IgE mediated) reaction to cow's milk
- mixed reactions (immediate and delayed)

Treatment of cow's milk protein allergy

CMPA is treated by removing all cow's milk and foods containing cow's milk from the diet.

- Mums who are breastfeeding a child with CMPA may need to have a milk free diet with appropriate calcium and vitamin D supplementation in their diet.
- Children who are bottle fed need a special formula prescribed (called an 'extensively hydrolysed' formula or 'amino acid' formula). In these formulas, the protein is broken down so it can't cause a reaction.
- Lactose free formulas and foods still contain cow's milk protein and are not suitable to use.
- Children who are taking solids will need to follow a cow's milk free diet.

YOUR CHILD NEEDS:

- mum to follow a milk free diet during breastfeeding
- a special infant formula prescribed:
Name _____
- milk free solid foods

Breast milk, formulas and dairy products are an important source of nutrients for young children, and it is important to make sure your child's diet is well balanced without cow's milk. Your doctor will give you more information on milk free diets (for mum or child). You will be referred to a paediatric dietitian for further advice.

Growing out of cow's milk protein allergy

Most children grow out of their milk allergy by the time they reach school age. We wait until at least 6 months have passed since diagnosis before challenging children with cow's milk again (and not until the child is one year old if they have been diagnosed as an infant).

Most children with **non-IgE mediated reactions** (delayed reactions) can be challenged at home. Most children with more severe and immediate reactions are challenged in hospital, where they can be closely monitored in case of a severe reaction.

If you challenge your child with milk and they have a reaction, we recommend waiting at least a further 6 months before rechallenging.

KEEP YOUR CHILD ON A COW'S MILK FREE DIET UNTIL:

DATE: _____

YOUR CHILD SHOULD BE CHALLENGED WITH COW'S MILK AT:

- Home
- Hospital

If your child can be re-challenged at home, your doctor will give you information about how to re-challenge safely at home. Follow the instructions carefully and ask your doctor if you are not sure.

Children who need to be challenged in hospital will be referred to specialists by your doctor.

More Information

Other good sources of information are:

- NHS Choices website
www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy
- Allergy UK www.allergyuk.org
- The Anaphylaxis Campaign
www.anaphylaxis.org.uk
- NICE guidelines on testing for food allergy in children: <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/food-allergy-in-children-and-young-people/testing-for-food-allergy>

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