



Cow's Milk Free Diet for Children

*This leaflet should only be used in conjunction with advice from your Paediatric Dietitian.
Information is correct at time of writing*

Why does my child need a cow's milk free diet?

Your child may need a cow's milk free diet for 2 main reasons:

1. Cow's milk protein allergy or intolerance

It is not uncommon for children to be allergic or intolerant to cow's milk. Symptoms vary, but can include; diarrhoea, vomiting, poor weight gain, facial swelling and skin rashes. A strict cow's milk free diet may be required for a short period or possibly years. The majority of children outgrow their intolerance or allergy by 5 years.

2. Lactose Intolerance

Sometimes after a tummy bug, diarrhoea or gastroenteritis a child can develop a temporary intolerance to lactose. This means that you child may not be able to digest lactose, the sugar found in milk. As a result, they will need to be on lactose-free milk and lactose-free alternative products for approximately 8 weeks. These are available from your local supermarket. After this time a normal diet can usually be resumed following advice from your dietitian.

Your child should only be following a cow's milk free diet if recommended by a doctor, allergy nurse or dietitian.

You should avoid any foods that contain:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Butter Butter milk Margarine Cheese Cream | Crème fraiche Ice-cream Fromage frais Yoghurt Skimmed milk powder | Curd Ghee Casein Caseinates Whey Whey protein | Milk solids Milk protein Milk powder Lactose |
|---|---|---|---|

Examples of food labels containing milk products:

Cheesy Crisps

Potato Starch, Sunflower Oil, Cheese Flavour [**Whey Powder (from Milk)**], Flavouring, **Milk Powder, Cheese Powder (from Milk)**

Beef Lasagne (ready meal)

Tomato, Minced British Beef, **Milk**, Pasta, **Cheddar Cheese (Milk)**, Water,, Tomato Purée, Onion, Red Peppers, **Gruyère Cheese (Milk)**, Cornflour

Always check the label as manufacturers change their ingredients from time to time; for example when they have 'new improved recipe'

Information for Patients

Cross Contamination

Can occur whilst preparing foods. If traces of milk need to be avoided ensure all work surfaces, chopping boards and utensils are well cleaned or use separate ones. Use separate containers for milk free butter, jams etc.

Food labelling

Under European Union allergy labelling laws ingredients containing milk have to be highlighted in bold or underlined on food packaging. If the food is from outside the EU labelling laws are different so check ingredients carefully.

Unlabelled foods

Be careful when choosing unlabelled food such as those found in butchers, bakeries and delicatessens. Ask at the counter for details about individual products to ensure they are free from milk. The food / food product should be avoided if you are unsure whether it contains milk.

Food Labelling 'May contain..'

The statement 'may contain' is often used on food packaging to indicate that a food product may have been contaminated with a common allergen. It is recommended that you avoid these foods
w

hen following a milk free diet. **Remember: If in doubt, leave it out and avoid!**

Allergy Alerts

Sometimes foods are recalled due to allergy labelling errors or other allergy risks. You can get alerts free at www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/subscribe

Eating Out

It can be difficult to follow a milk free diet when eating out at a restaurant, friend's house or party. The key is to try and plan ahead. Try to call ahead to the restaurant or speak with the parent. This will help to ensure suitable meal options are available. Avoid self service areas due to risk of cross contamination.

Fast Food

- Pizza will contain cheese
- Burger rolls may contain milk
- Avoid fried, battered, breaded or processed foods as these often contain hidden milk

Indian

Many Indian dishes contain milk in the form of yoghurt, ghee, paneer (cheese) or milk powder.

Chinese

Often savoury dishes do not contain milk products; however it is best to check with the individual provider. Chinese confectionery, including cakes may contain hidden milk sources.

Milk Substitutes – What should I give my child?

Mammalian milks, such as goat's milk and sheep's milk are not suitable to use whilst following a milk free diet as they have similar allergenic proteins to cow's milk.

Supermarket calcium enriched milk alternatives such as oat, coconut, almond and soya milks can be used as a main substitute for children over 2 year old. There is a junior soya and oat milk that may be suitable from 1 year of age (discuss with your dietitian).

Look for varieties which have minimum 120mg calcium per 100ml.

Please note that rice milk is not advised as a main milk substitute for children under 4 1/2 years old due to its naturally occurring arsenic content.

How much should my child take?

Your dietitian will assess this for you but generally:

1-3 years age: 300ml of milk substitute

4-10 years age: 400ml of milk substitute

11 years and over : 600ml of milk substitute

Calcium

Calcium is needed for healthy bones and teeth. A child's main source of calcium often comes from dairy products, such as milk, cheese and yogurts. Children who are following a cow's milk free diet may find it difficult to get enough calcium from non-dairy calcium-rich foods

| Recommended Daily Calcium Intake | |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| 1-3 Years | 350mg |
| 4-6 years | 450mg |
| 7-10 years | 550mg |
| Boys 11-15 years | 1000mg |
| Girls 11-15 years | 800mg |
| Breast feeding | 1250mg |

Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium from foods. It is made through the action of sunlight on our skin during the summer months (April-September). It is found in a small number of foods (oily fish, egg yolks, fortified margarines and some breakfast cereals).

It is very difficult to get all the vitamin D we need from diet alone so it is recommended that all children under the age of 5 years take a daily multivitamin supplement containing vitamins A, C and D.

You may be eligible for free Healthy Start vitamins – see: www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Calcium content—Milk-free calcium rich foods

| Calcium rich foods and drinks | Portion size | Calcium content (mg) | Calcium star rating |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Milk substitutes / alternatives | | | |
| Calcium enriched soya milk | 200ml (1/3 pint) | 240mg | ★★★★ |
| Calcium enriched oat milk | 200mls (1/3 pint) | 240mg | ★★★★ |
| Soya yogurt / dessert | 125g | 150mg | ★★ |
| Soya custard | 100g | 120mg | ★★ |
| Milk free / soya cheese | 30g | 60g | ★ |
| Breads and Cereals | | | |
| Calcium fortified bread | 1 slice | 150-225mg | ★★★ |
| Chapatti / pitta bread | 1 small (65g) | 60mg | ★ |
| White bread | 1 slice | 50mg | ★ |
| Fortified breakfast cereals | 30g | 137mg | ★★ |
| Protein Sources | | | |
| Tinned salmon with bones | 60g (1/2 small tin) | 182mg | ★★★★ |
| Scampi | 90g (6 pieces) | 190mg | ★★★★ |
| Tofu set with calcium chloride or calcium sulphate | 60g | 200mg | ★★★★ |
| Fruit and Vegetables | | | |
| Broccoli (boiled) | 3 florets | 60mg | ★ |
| Curly kale | 70g | 90mg | ★ |
| Cabbage | 90g | 50mg | ★ |
| Okra | 6 fingers (stir fried) | 66mg | ★ |

Note: Spinach, dried fruits, beans, seeds and nuts are not good sources of calcium. This is because they contain oxalates and / or phytates which reduce how much calcium your body can absorb from them.

Sample menu options

Breakfast

- Cereal or porridge made with milk substitute
- Toast with dairy free margarine, marmalade, jam or peanut butter
- Poached / scrambled egg on toast
- Cooked breakfast—grilled bacon, sausage, tomatoes, beans and egg
- Fresh fruit juice or milk substitute

Lunch / Light Meal

- Spaghetti / beans * on toast
- Tinned soup * / homemade soup
- Sandwiches / wraps / bread roll with suitable filling such as hard boiled egg, chicken and salad, peanut butter or ham *
- Scrambled egg on toast
- Dairy-free cheese on toast
- Plain pizza base with cheese-free toppings such as tomatoes, onion, pepper or meat with a drizzle of olive oil
- Vegetable sticks with houmous
- Baked potato with dairy-free filling

Dinner

- Meat - chicken, turkey, pork, beef, lamb.
- Fish made in a milk free white sauce
- Chilli con carne with rice
- Spaghetti bolognese
- Cottage / Shepherd's pie made with milk substitute
- Pasta bake made with milk substitute
- Milk free meat or vegetable curry
- Meat and vegetable stir fry with noodles

Snacks

- Bread sticks / crackers / rice cakes
- Pitta toast
- Fruit / dried fruit
- Vegetable sticks
- Milk free biscuit

Desserts

- Rice pudding made with milk substitute
 - Soya yogurts or desserts
 - Dairy free custard
 - Fresh fruit
 - Jelly
- * check ingredients to check brand is milk free

Recipe Ideas - Cow's milk free

Milk substitutes and milk-free margarine can be used to create many items that usually contain milk. There are many ideas for recipes available online

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will my child be able to stay for school or nursery dinner?

R. Yes, this should not be a problem. Your child's nursery or school should be able to give you access to their menu and allergy information. If required speak to the dietitian who can liaise with the nursery or school cook to give information on appropriate choices.

Q. What happens if milk containing foods are eaten?

A. It depends on your child's symptoms. Some children experience skin problems with dairy foods, others tummy upset. In the majority of cases a small amount should cause little harm. However, a minority of children are severely intolerant and being vigilant is all you can do.

Q. Will my child grow out of their allergy/intolerance?

R. Many children do outgrow their intolerance / allergy in their toddler years. It can however take until they are 5 years old to fully outgrow their allergy / intolerance to cow's milk.

Q. When can I reintroduce cow's milk my child's diet?

R. This can vary considerably between children. You should discuss when and how to reintroduce cow's milk products with your doctor, allergy nurse or dietitian.

Additional support

www.anaphylaxis.org.uk and www.allergyuk.org

- national charities providing support and information

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/food allergy](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/food%20allergy)

www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis

- provide information on allergies

www.bda.uk.com

- the British Dietetic Association provides fact sheets on food allergy and intolerance

For further support please contact your Paediatric Dietitian on 0121 424 1674

Accessibility

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