



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

### 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'**

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## 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 when 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](http://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.

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### 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](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

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### Calcium content—Milk-free calcium rich foods

Calcium rich foods and drinks	Portion size	Calcium content (mg)	Calcium star rating
<b>Milk substitutes / alternatives</b>			
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	★
<b>Breads and Cereals</b>			
Calcium fortified bread	1 slice	150-225mg	★★★
Chapatti / pitta bread	1 small (65g)	60mg	★
White bread	1 slice	50mg	★
Fortified breakfast cereals	30g	137mg	★★
<b>Protein Sources</b>			
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	★★★★
<b>Fruit and Vegetables</b>			
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.**

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## 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 bolognaisse
- 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

# Information for Patients

## 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 re-introduce cow's milk products with your doctor, allergy nurse or dietitian.

## Additional support

[www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk) and [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

- national charities providing support and information

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

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis)

- provide information on allergies

[www.bda.uk.com](http://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

To view this information in a different language or use the text-to-speech reader visit [www.uhb.nhs.uk](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk), click the yellow and black circular icon in the bottom right of the web page to open the ReachDeck toolbar and then use the search bar to search by the name of the leaflet. If you require this information in another format such as braille or audio please email [interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk).



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