

Milk allergy

Symptoms caused by milk allergy can vary, so it is important that you see a health professional for a diagnosis. This fact sheet will help you to follow a healthy, balanced milk-free diet.

You may need to avoid cows milk and food made with cows milk because you react to the protein, or to the lactose (the sugar in milk), or both. If you have to avoid all cows milk, you should also avoid other animal milks/products such as goat, sheep and buffalo.

It is important that you understand what you need to avoid. Your dietitian will be able to advise on how strict your cows milk avoidance needs to be.

Always check the label

Cows milk is often added to prepared manufactured foods. Under current EU law, milk is one of the common allergens (the substance that causes an allergy) that must be clearly labelled on packaged foods and drinks. Current EU labelling laws do not currently apply to foods sold loose e.g. from a bakery, delicatessen or cafe. These laws may be different outside the EU so check ingredients carefully when you travel.

From December 2014, EU allergen labelling laws change. All ingredient information will be given in the ingredients list and any allergens emphasised e.g. bold or highlighted. There may also be an 'allergy advice statement' referring you to the highlighted allergens in the list. For foods sold without packaging in the UK e.g. restaurants, cafes or delicatessens, allergen information will be provided either in writing or verbally.

'May contain' statements are often used on food packaging to state that a food may be contaminated with one of the common allergens including cows milk. It is important to discuss with your dietitian the safest approach to these foods.



Check labels for these ingredients:

- buttermilk
- cows milk (*fresh, UHT*)
- condensed Milk
- cream/artificial cream
- evaporated milk
- butter, butter oil
- ghee
- margarine
- cheese
- fromage frais
- ice-cream
- yoghurt
- casein (curds), caseinates
- calcium or sodium caseinate
- hydrolysed casein
- hydrolysed whey protein
- lactoglobulin
- lactoalbumin
- lactose
- milk powder, skimmed milk powder
- milk protein
- milk sugar
- milk solids, non -fat milk solids
- modified milk
- whey, whey solids, hydrolysed whey
- whey protein, whey syrup sweetener

Manufacturers and supermarkets produce lists of own brand products that are free from cows milk or other allergens. These can be requested from customer services or downloaded from their websites. These lists can help you to identify which foods are safe to eat and make your diet more interesting and nutritious.

Choose milk free alternatives that are fortified with calcium. Most contain as much calcium as you would find in cows milk (120mg per 100mls).

Lactose intolerance

Lactose intolerance is often confused with milk allergy. It happens when the sugar in milk (called lactose) cannot be digested.

Alternative milk foods:

- **Milks** - oat, soya, flaxseed, sesame rice, pea, coconut, quinoa, hemp, potato and nut (e.g. almond or hazelnut)
- **Spreads** - milk free and vegan spreads
- **Cheese** - hard, soft, melting and parmesan varieties of milk free cheeses based on soya, pea, cashew, almond or rice protein
- **Yoghurts and desserts** - soya, pea, coconut, almond*
- **Ice creams and frozen desserts** - soya, rice, coconut, almond* and cashew*
- **Creams** - soya, oat rice, coconut and almond*

* Avoid nut-based milk alternatives if you have/are at risk of a nut allergy

If you are lactose intolerant, lactose-free milk, cheese, ice cream and yoghurt products are available from supermarkets, health food shops and online.

Some cheeses are naturally low in lactose so are often suitable e.g. Edam and Cheddar.

Please note: these products are not suitable for cows milk allergy because the protein content is unchanged.

Calcium

Choose alternatives to milk, yoghurt and custard that are fortified with calcium. Many now contain as much calcium as you would find in cows milk (120mg per 100mls). Try to have around three portions a day. You may need to take a calcium supplement to meet your calcium requirements. Your dietitian can advise you further on this.



Milk free products can be substituted in recipes but here are some helpful hints:

1. Don't add soya milk to coffee as it tends to curdle (go lumpy) but it is fine in tea.
2. Use plain soya or coconut based yoghurts, coconut milk or oat cream when making curries, raita, stroganoffs, creamy sauces and dips.
3. Egg white replacer can be used to make a dairy free and soya free whipping cream. This is available on prescription or can be ordered from any chemist.
4. Grate milk-free hard cheeses on the fine part of the grater.
5. Use a milk-free melting cheese on pizza, cheese on toast and on lasagne.
6. Use a non-melting hard cheese to make cheese sauces. Using a microwave will stop it sticking to the bottom of the saucepan (which also works for milk free custard and porridge).
7. Use milk-free soft or spreading cheese or dairy-free sour cream in dips, cheesecakes and other savoury and sweet sauces.

Summary

It is important to find out how strict your cows milk avoidance needs to be. Under EU law, if milk is an ingredient it must be clearly labelled, but always check as ingredients change; take extra care with loose foods without labels on them. Manufacturers and supermarkets produce 'free from' lists to help you know which foods are safe to eat and add variety to your diet. Choose milk-free alternatives that have added calcium and will help add variety and nutrition to your diet.

Further information:

Food Fact Sheets on other topics including Milk Allergy in Children, Calcium and Vitamin D are available at www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts

Useful links:

www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/allergyintol/label/
www.goodnessdirect.co.uk
www.vegan.co.uk
www.kosher.org.uk

This Food Factsheet is a public service of The British Dietetic Association (BDA) intended for information only. It is not a substitute for proper medical diagnosis or dietary advice given by a dietitian. If you need to see a dietitian, visit your GP for a referral or: www.freelancedietitians.org for a private dietitian.

To check your dietitian is registered check www.hpc-uk.org
Food Fact Sheets on general dietary topics are available to download free of charge at www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts

Written by Tanya Wright, Dr Lisa Waddell and Liane Reeves, Dietitians on behalf of the Food Allergy and Intolerance Group of the BDA. The information sources used to develop this fact sheet are available at www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts

© BDA July 2014. Review date July 2017. Version 10

