

CMPA AND WEANING ON A DAIRY FREE DIET

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What is CMPA?

Cow's Milk Protein Allergy occurs when the body's immune system mistakes the proteins in cow's milk as harmful and launches a protective defence reaction to them.



The reaction can be immediate (up to 2 hours after consumption) or it can occur several days later. Symptoms can include a red itchy rash or swelling around the lips and face, stomach ache, colic, diarrhoea, vomiting or eczema that doesn't improve with creams. Occasionally severe allergic symptoms can occur, for example, swelling in the mouth or throat, wheezing, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing. If this happens then it is vital to get urgent medical help via a hospital or calling 999.

Diagnosis is usually made via a trial of removing cow's milk and dairy from the diet to see if symptoms improve and then re-testing to see if the symptoms return. It is important to work with a healthcare professional in this process. Your child will then need to follow a dairy free diet, avoiding whey and casein, the proteins in cow, goat and sheep milk that cause the allergic response.

Cow's milk protein allergy is not the same as lactose intolerance. Lactose intolerance is uncommon in children under 3 years of age and results from a lack of the enzyme lactase, needed to digest lactose in milk.

If you are breastfeeding you should avoid cows milk and other dairy products yourself. If you are formula feeding then a hypoallergenic formula will need to be recommended by your paediatric team. It is key for you to get advice from a dietitian on which formula to use as your child's needs will vary with age, their allergic reaction and nutritional needs.



STARTING WEANING

Research now suggests that it is best to start weaning using a vegetable first approach. This means you offer bitter vegetables only (e.g. broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, kale) for the first 2 weeks and then introduce more variety. On a dairy free diet you will need to avoid all cows milk, cheese, yoghurt and check the labels of any foods you offer your baby. See table 1 for a list of words to look out for. Whilst it is totally safe to wean your little one on a dairy free diet, it is important to replace nutrients found in dairy foods, so they meet all their nutritional needs.

When purchasing prepared meals, check allergens on the reverse of the pack (they should be highlighted in the ingredient panel). For Aisha meals offer an incredibly diverse range of ingredients and contain very few of the major allergens (some recipes contain fish but they are clearly labelled).

SHOULD I DELAY THE INTRODUCTION OF OTHER ALLERGENS?

There is no need to delay introducing other allergens (e.g nuts, egg, wheat) unless your little one has had a severe allergic response to another food. If you are worried then offer these foods earlier in the day with a supportive adult close by. Then you have longer to watch for an allergic reaction, and can get medical help if it is needed. If your baby suffers a reaction from a food during weaning this does not always mean you have to remove it from their diet. For example, a rash from fruit or vegetables is likely to clear up quickly and not be a problem. However if your baby suffers a more severe reaction that affects their breathing or causes swelling in the mouth/throat, seek medical support right away.

SHOULD I DELAY WEANING?

Weaning should start as soon as your baby is developmentally ready – usually between 17 weeks and 6 months of age. There is no evidence showing that delaying weaning past 6 months is beneficial. In fact, leaving weaning past 6 months could have a negative effect on your baby accepting food with lumps and acceptance of new foods as they grow.

When cooking and also when purchasing prepared baby food meals, try to get as wide a variety of flavours as possible. Every little mouthful of food will help them to grow and experience new tastes. It's not just about filling their tummies.

The good news is that just because your little one has to follow a dairy free diet now, it doesn't mean that this is a lifelong condition. The majority of children will outgrow it by the age of 5, so it's important to work with your paediatric team and retry these foods every 6-12 months.

NUTRIENTS

Cow's milk and dairy foods can form a major part of your baby's diet. These foods provide energy, calcium and vitamin D for bones and teeth, iodine for the brain, vitamin A for eyes and riboflavin for energy release. If your child cannot eat dairy foods then it is important they are getting these nutrients from other foods. Here are some top tips:

Calcium can be found in plant based milks and yoghurts, green leafy vegetables (spinach, kale, and broccoli) tofu, some nuts and seeds, beans and pulses. Offer your little one 3-4 portions of these a day to help them meet their calcium needs. Great recipes would be; a lentil and spinach dhal or a tofu and broccoli stir fry.

It is recommended that all children should now have a vitamin D supplement of 10 micrograms per day. You cannot get enough from food alone as this is the sunshine vitamin! Vitamin D is however added in to some non-dairy milks, which you will be able to see by checking the label.

Iodine is found in dairy foods but is also in shellfish, white fish, seaweed and eggs. It is an important nutrient for brain function and sexual development. Iodine rich meals that are dairy free include scrambled eggs on toast or the For Aisha Fish and Coconut Curry.

Good sources of vitamin A include orange/yellow vegetables like red peppers and carrots, green leafy vegetables and eggs.

Riboflavin is a B vitamin that is needed to help the body release energy from food and if you offer your little one a varied diet over their week, they should get all the riboflavin they need. Cow's milk is the best source of riboflavin in the Western diet but it is also found in wholegrains, eggs and green vegetables like spinach.

WHAT OTHER MILKS AND FOODS CAN I USE?

Alternative plant-based milks (oat, pea, quinoa) can be used in cooking and on cereal from 6 months of age, but these should not be the main milk drunk as often they are lower in energy, protein and fat. When choosing a plant milk look for ones with a higher fat and protein content like the barista style oat milk and junior soya milk to help meet your little one's energy needs.

For recommendations on other milks see Table 2 below.

Milk free foods that can be eaten as a substitute can be seen below in Table 3.

Most other foods can be adapted using dairy free options. You can use a dairy free spread in baking or a dairy free milk in cooking and to make rice pudding or custard. Using soya milk in cooking or blending frozen bananas to make ice-cream are great and yummy ideas!

**TABLE 1: WORDS TO LOOK OUT FOR
(AND TO AVOID) ON FOOD LABELS:**

cows milk	cheese
casein and caseinates	milk powder, skimmed milk powder, milk sugar, milk protein, non-fat milk solids, modified milk
evaporated milk	yoghurt
calcium or sodium caseinate	fromage frais
condensed milk	margarine
hydrolysed casein	ice cream
buttermilk	cream/artificial cream
whey, whey solids, whey powder, whey protein, whey syrup sweetener, hydrolysed whey protein	lactoglobulin
butter, butter oil	lactalbumin
ghee	

TABLE 2. TYPES OF MILKS

Types of Milk	Recommendations on use
Soya Milk	This can be an option but this needs to be discussed with your dietitian first in case of a soya allergy.
Nut Milk (eg cashew nut)	These should only be used as a substitute when there is no nut allergy.

TABLE 3. MILK FREE ALTERNATIVES

Milks	oat, soya, flaxseed, pea, coconut, quinoa, hemp and nut*
Spreads	milk free and dairy versions
Cheese	hard, soft, melting and parmesan versions of dairy free cheese (soya, pea, cashew, almond*, rice and coconut cheese alternatives)
Ice creams, yoghurts and creams	soya, rice, coconut, almond* and cashew*

* as long as there is no nut allergy

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References:

1. Allergy UK https://www.allergyuk.org/assets/000/001/207/Cow%27s_Milk_Free_Diet_Information_for_Babies_and_Children_original.pdf?1501228993
2. British Dietetic Association. Food Fact. Milk Allergy. https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/milk_allergy
3. NICE: Cows milks protein allergy in children: <https://cks.nice.org.uk/cows-milk-protein-allergy-in-children#!scenario:1>
4. The MAP Guideline Milk ladder: <http://ifan.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Milk-Ladder-2013-MAP.pdf>