

# Milk Allergy: The Facts



Milk allergy results from a hypersensitivity of the immune system to the proteins in cow's milk. Symptoms can occur within minutes or hours of contact with milk and can range from mild to severe. For a severe allergy, contact with cow's milk protein must be completely eliminated. Fortunately, most children eventually "outgrow" this allergy, but in severe cases it may persist. Note that lactose intolerance is a completely different condition; see COMPARE! chart for specifics.

## Allergy/Asthma Information Association

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## BREAST IS BEST

Plan to breast-feed since it may lessen the chance or delay the onset of a milk allergy. The nursing mother with a milk allergic infant may find it necessary to limit her own consumption of milk products.

## WHEN BREAST-FEEDING IS NOT AN OPTION

Be cautious. At this time there is no perfect milk substitute on the market ideal for everyone allergic to milk protein. Milk allergic children can become allergic to soy and goat's milk protein. The least allergenic substitutes seem to be formulas called "casein hydrolysates"--Nutramigen, Pregestimil, Alimentum--made from pre-digested protein. Expect help from your doctor to find a formula suitable for your baby.

## SOLID FOOD WHAT AND WHEN?

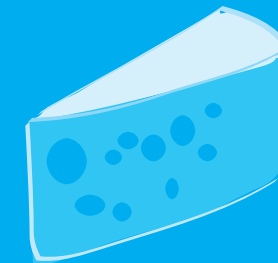
Take your time introducing solid food. When the baby is 6 months old begin with iron-enriched, single grain infant cereals like rice or barley. Slowly introduce pureed meat and egg (starting with cooked egg yolk, then adding egg white) as an additional source of iron. You can start with chicken, turkey and lamb, the least likely to cause an allergic reaction. Then, incorporate pureed single vegetables at the rate of one a week starting with a small spoonful. Move on to pureed fruit, excluding citrus, introducing each in the same manner as vegetables. However, ask your doctor about introducing allergy-causing foods if there is a strong family history of food allergies or if the baby already has a food allergy or severe eczema.

## DON'T KEEP IT A SECRET

Tell everyone who may have contact with your child about the allergy. A letter from your doctor explaining the diagnosis may be helpful in convincing skeptics of its seriousness. Carry prescribed medicines with you at all times and provide your child with a MedicAlert bracelet. Have your allergist periodically reassess your child. Be reassured that elimination of foods containing milk protein may help bring the allergy to a quick end.



| COMPARE!  |   |
|---|---|
| MILK ALLERGY  | LACTOSE INTOLERANCE   |
| <b>cause</b><br>abnormal reaction of the <u>immune system</u> to milk proteins  | <b>cause</b><br>not enough of the enzyme lactase needed by the <u>digestive system</u> to breakdown all the milk sugar lactose  |
| <b>age</b><br>usually starts in early infancy, rarely after 12 months of age  | <b>age</b><br>very rare in the first two years of life  |
| <b>diagnosis</b><br>by a qualified allergist based on a detailed history and... possible tests:<br>• skin prick test • blood tests--total IgE or RAST<br>• food challenge, open or double-blind (not done where there is a history of anaphylaxis)  | <b>diagnosis</b><br>by a qualified medical practitioner based on a detailed history and... possible test:<br>• breath hydrogen excretion after a lactose challenge<br>• In adults, the numbers are difficult to determine as people sometimes tend to self-diagnose   |
| <b>symptoms</b><br>can be immediate or delayed, affect <b>digestion:</b><br>• nausea • vomiting • diarrhea • stomach cramps<br><b>skin:</b><br>• hives • eczema • swelling<br><b>airways:</b><br>• runny nose • nasal congestion • wheezing • coughing<br><b>anaphylaxis:</b><br>Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that can involve several body systems and lead to death if left untreated | <b>symptoms</b><br>affect <b>digestion</b> only :<br>• diarrhea<br>• vomiting<br>• abdominal bloating<br>• stomach cramps<br>• gas  |
| <b>treatment</b><br>• eliminate foods containing milk protein, a very small quantity of milk protein may bring on symptoms<br>• breast-feed, if possible for as long as possible (mother may have to moderate her own intake of milk products)<br>• use hypoallergenic infant formulas (test for tolerance)   | <b>treatment</b><br>• symptoms are generally dose-dependent, small amounts of lactose containing foods (ex. 250 mL milk) are often well tolerated<br>• Hard cheeses such as Mozzarella and aged cheeses like Cheddar, Swiss, Blue and Brie, as well as yogurt are generally well-tolerated<br>• ask a pharmacist for "lactase" tablets or drops such as Lactaid™, Lacteeze™ or a generic brand. They work to break down the lactose in milk for you |



## CHECK LABELS CAREFULLY!

All prepared food must carry a label listing the ingredients. Current food labelling regulations require milk proteins to be listed under the common name of milk. When in doubt about any food ingredient call the manufacturer. "Parve" or "pareve" means no meat or milk but does not rule out cross-contamination with dairy products.

### some food ingredients that indicate or may indicate\* the presence of milk protein:

- ammonium caseinate
- artificial butter flavour
- butter solids/fat
- calcium caseinate
- caramel colour\*
- caramel flavouring\*
- casein
- caseinate
- delactosed whey
- demineralized whey
- dried milk
- dry milk solids
- flavouring\*
- high protein flour\*
- hydrolyzed casein
- hydrolyzed milk protein
- lactalbumin
- lactalbumin phosphate
- lactoferrin
- lactoglobulin
- lactose
- lactulose
- magnesium caseinate
- milk derivative
- milk fat
- milk ingredients
- milk protein
- modified milk ingredients
- natural flavouring\*
- potassium caseinate
- rennet casein
- Simplese (fat replacer)
- sodium caseinate
- solids
- sour cream solids
- sour milk solids
- whey
- whey protein concentrate

### some foods that contain or may contain\* milk protein:

- baked goods\* (cake, bread, cookies, crackers, donuts, waffles, pancakes...)
- butter
- buttermilk
- calcium fortified orange juice
- candy\*
- cheese
- chewing gum (for ex. Trident XTRA Care gum)
- chocolate\*
- cream
- cream soup
- curds
- custard
- deli meats\*
- egg substitutes\*
- frozen yogurt
- gravy\*
- ghee
- Half & Half
- hot dogs\*
- ice cream
- kefir
- margarine\*
- milk (whole, 2%, 1%, skim, condensed, evaporated, powdered, lactose reduced)
- pizza
- pudding
- salad dressing\*
- sausages\*
- seasonings\*
- sherbet
- sour cream
- yogurt

## FICTION and FACT

### FICTION:

No other animal drinks the milk of another species. A milk allergy is proof that to do so is out of harmony with nature.

### FACT:

A milk allergy results from a hypersensitivity of the immune system to the proteins in cow's milk possibly caused by a genetic predisposition. Studies show that 2 to 3% of infants are milk allergic and most outgrow it within a couple of years. If drinking milk was really "out of harmony with nature" one would expect the allergy incidence to be much greater. It would hold true for other allergens as well, such as peanuts, soy, legumes and tree nuts.

### FICTION:

Milk causes asthma.

### FACT:

There is no evidence that dairy products can cause asthma. A person with a milk allergy may develop asthma but there is no cause and effect relationship between the two. Note, an allergic reaction to milk may trigger wheezing, especially in infants.

### FICTION:

Milk causes a number of problems like constipation, ear infections and mucus secretion.

### FACT:

Constipation is not related to what we eat but rather to what we don't eat. More foods with fibre (whole grain breads and cereals; dried beans, peas and lentils; fruit and vegetables), more liquids and more exercise are good habits to adopt.

Ear infections are caused by germs.

The feeling of secreting a thick mucus may be linked to not drinking enough of all liquids, including milk (if not allergic). 1.5 to 2 litres of liquid a day is a good rule of thumb.

## FIND A DIETITIAN

Concerned that your child is getting all the nutrients necessary for normal, healthy growth? A call to the nutrition department at the local children's hospital, the local health unit, the provincial association or college of dietitians will help you find a qualified nutrition professional. You can also contact Dietitians of Canada online at [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)