

Feeding Children a dairy free diet- an at home guide

Children may need to follow a dairy free diet for a number of different reasons. They may have an allergy to the protein in cow's milk, or an intolerance to lactose, the natural sugar found in milk. Other children may avoid dairy food because they are vegetarian or vegan. So, following a dairy free diet can be a preference or in some cases it is essential.

What should I do if I think my child needs to follow a dairy free diet?

If you think your child has an allergy or intolerance to dairy foods then it's important to ask for medical advice from your GP. You shouldn't just cut out an important food group like dairy from your child's diet without medical support, because they could miss out on important nutrients like calcium for healthy bones and protein for growth and repair. This fact sheet tells you more about childhood food allergies and intolerances in general and more specifically about following a dairy free diet.

What's the difference between a food allergy and a food intolerance?

If your child has a food allergy, their immune system reacts to certain proteins, thinking they are alien and attacking them. Symptoms occur quickly and range from swelling and irritation in the mouth to a severe reaction known as anaphylactic shock, which although rare, can be life threatening.

Food intolerance is more common than allergy and does not involve the immune system and is very rarely life threatening. Symptoms vary a lot from stomach pain, bloating, diarrhoea, constipation, headaches and rashes and these can immerge a few hours or a couple of days after eating a problem food.

The most common foods to cause children problems are: Cow's milk, Eggs, Shellfish, Fish, Soya, Nuts, Wheat and some citrus fruits and kiwi.

Allergies and intolerances to dairy food

Cow's Milk Protein Allergy

This is the most common food allergy to occur in children, it affects between 2-5% of children under 3. If you have a family history of allergy or are prone to allergic diseases like eczema then your children are more likely to have similar problems. The good news is that most children grow out of this between the ages of 3-5. If your child has true Cow's Milk Protein Allergy then they are advised to follow a completely dairy free diet.

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose intolerance happens because the body doesn't produce enough of the enzyme Lactase, used to digest the natural sugar found in milk. Lactose intolerance is much more common than Cow's Milk protein Allergy, with about 5% of the UK population affected. It's more common in children and adolescents than adults. Young children are particularly prone to lactose intolerance after a stomach infection. Children with lactose intolerance need to avoid cow's milk and sheep's and goat's milk. Sometimes children can go on to tolerate a small amount of dairy, because they produce a small amount of lactase, but to begin with it's best to follow a complete dairy free diet.

Vegetarian and vegan diets

Your family may follow a vegetarian or vegan diet, and this may be for health, religious or cultural reasons. Vegetarian diets can include dairy foods without a problem. Vegan diets exclude any foods of animal origin including dairy, eggs and honey.

Children on a dairy free diet

Suitable milk alternatives for Under 1s

Breast feeding or infant formula are the preferred milk source for children under 1 year old. If your child has an allergy to cow's milk protein your doctor or Paediatric Dietitian will advise you about the suitability of alternative, specialised soya based formula- most alternative formula are based on soya.

Goat, sheep and buffalo milks and formula are NOT appropriate for the treatment of cow's milk protein allergy.

Milk alternatives for children over 1

Most parents are advised to continue specialised soya formula feeding until 2 years of age. Some children over one who are eating well may be able to come off their soya based formula and switch to a general plant based alternative to milk such as a fortified soya milk. If you are unsure about when to stop using soya based formula consult your GP or Dietitian.

For all children following a dairy free diet it is important to choose a plant based alternative which provides enough of the essential nutrients like fat, calories, protein and calcium which would normally be provided by milk. These nutrients are essential for growth and development but are not found in equal amounts in all plant based dairy alternatives- for instance rice milk and oat milk provides very little fat, protein, vitamins and minerals so is not suitable.

Avoiding milk and milk sources



Ingredients lists

It is easy to avoid obvious sources of milk, however it is often disguised in prepared and manufactured foods – read the ingredients list carefully. Manufactured pre-packaged foods sold within the EU have to list milk in the ingredients panel if it is present in the product, no matter how

small the amount. Check packets every time they are purchased, as products are reformulated all the time and ingredients often change.

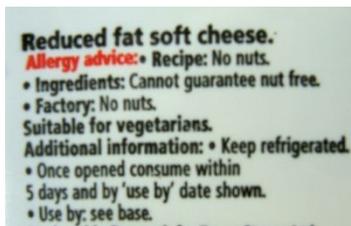
Check the ingredients for the presence of the following sources of milk:

- Butter
- Butter oil
- Butter milk
- Casein
- Caesinates
- Cheese
- Cow's milk (pasteurised, UHT, evaporated, condensed, dried)
- Cream
- Curd
- Ghee
- Lactoglobulin

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<http://grub4life.org.uk/factsheets/n9d01db72a89980d20173b76b7fe35e47/>

- Lactose (only if lactose intolerant or severe milk allergy)
- Milk solids
- Non-fat milk solids
- Whey
- Hydrolysed whey
- Whey powder



- Whey syrup sweetener
- Yogurt
- Fromage frais
- Unspecified flavourings (only if severe milk allergy)

“Allergy advice” panel (can also appear as: “contains” or “free from”)

Many food labels now contain an allergy advice panel as an additional way of highlighting the presence of allergens – including milk. But it isn't compulsory for food labels to give this type of statement. So if there isn't an allergy advice panel on the label, don't assume the product is free from an allergen you should always check the ingredients list.

Sometimes allergy advice panels can be confusing. The soft cheese product label shown above doesn't state that it contains milk!

Fresh items from restaurants, delicatessens and bakeries do not have to declare the ingredients list- so ask!

Traces of cow's milk can also be present in some non foods- especially- medicines, toothpaste and vitamin supplements- ask your pharmacist for advice on dairy free alternatives.

Hidden sources of milk in everyday foods

As you have seen from the ingredients list section, milk comes in many guises and may be added to a variety of manufactured foods. The following table includes foods which may contain milk or milk derivatives:

Cereal foods	Bread and bread rolls Breakfast cereals Cakes Biscuits and crackers Pizza Pasta (fresh and canned)
Fruits and vegetables	Vegetables canned in sauce Instant potato Baked beans Batter- or breadcrumb-coated vegetable and potato products
Meat, fish and alternatives	Meat or fish products, e.g. beef burgers, sausages, fish fingers, ready meals
Savoury foods	Canned, fresh and packet soups Instant gravies / gravy granules Sauces Crisps and savoury snack foods
Desserts	Instant desserts e.g. mousse Dairy desserts e.g. rice pudding Ice cream Custard
Confectionary	Chocolate Caramel Toffee Fudge
Fats and spread	Butter Margarines and fat spread
Drinks	Instant drinking chocolate Malted drinks Coffee whitener Smoothies containing milk

This list is by no means exhaustive. And all food labels should be checked every time you shop as ingredients do change. Also, just because a food appears on the list isn't a guarantee it contains milk, different manufacturers may use different ingredients for a similar product – again, check the allergy advice panel (if present) and the ingredients list.

Substitutes

Avoidance of milk can reduce your child's choice foods. Substituting ingredients containing dairy or traces of dairy can increase the choices open to your child and make life a lot easier for you.

If a recipe or menu calls for milk, cheese, yogurt or other milk containing food take a look at the table of possible substitutes you can use instead. Some recipes will work very well with substitutes, others will be less successful so it's all about experimenting!

Milk- containing food	Milk-free alternative to use instead
Pasteurised milk	Soya dairy alternative. Ensure they are fortified with calcium
Butter or margarine	Dairy free and vegan spreads
Cheese	Soya cheese – available as hard, soft, melting, spreading and parmesan varieties
Yogurt	Soya, alternatives. Ensure they are fortified with calcium.
Ice cream	Soya, rice or oat alternatives
Cream	Soya or oat alternatives
Custard	Soya custard- ready made
Milk based dessert	Soya dessert- ready made

Special products to help make a dairy free diet easier

Alpro Soya has recently introduced "Junior 1+" milk alternative. The product has been nutritionally tailored as a main drink for children from 1 onwards. It provides over half the daily recommended calcium intake for a child ages between 1-3 years in a 200ml serving, is enriched with iron and vitamin D and contains more fat and calories than original Alpro Soya.

Original soya alternatives to milk are suitable as a main milk drink for children over 2 providing they are enriched with calcium. It can also be used as an ingredient as part of a weaning diet from 6 months of age

Other suitable dairy free foods

Dairy free diets usually exclude all dairy foods including milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter, ice cream custards and desserts containing milk and nutritious alternatives to all of these foods are widely available.

It's relatively easy to control what your child eat at home, but school, parties days out a visits to friends can be more tricky. Communication and knowing what food can be problematic is the key to making these occasions as straight forward and problem free as possible.

Dairy free and away from home

At nursery

Speak to your nursery- they will be used to caring for children following a dairy free diet. They may ask to see confirmation of your child's diagnosis from your GP, dietitian or health visitor- this is normal practice.

The nursery cook may also be able to reassure you by talking to you about policies and procedures for dairy free diets.

The nursery may use different coloured plates or serving mats to help staff identify children following special diets- again this is quite usual. Any nurseries or children's centres using Grub4life menus and recipes will have information on adapting recipes for diary free diets.

At school

Let your child's teacher know about their intolerance or allergy. School caterers should also be informed.

If your child takes a packed lunch to school make sure they know not to swap any food with other children, and again ensure the school teacher is aware of the allergy and intolerance.

Tea with friends

Telephone parents to tell them about your child's allergy or intolerance, and make sure you let them know that you will send some suitable alternative foods to make life easier.

Give your child some non dairy snacks, drinks or cakes and desserts to take with them.

More help?

Thankfully food allergies and intolerances are much better understood these days. They are also much better catered for and there is a wealth of good quality information to help support you.

The Vegan Society www.vegansociety.com

The Vegetarian Society www.vegsoc.org

The Vegetarian and Vegan Society www.vegetarian.org.uk

Grub4life Food Allergy and Intolerance Manual for Nurseries and Children's centres

<http://grub4life.org.uk/factsheets/nc1b98546ad0e5c024f2ae1bbd227293b/>

Action Against Allergy www.actionagainstallergy.co.uk

Allergy UK www.allergyuk.org

Anaphylaxis Campaign www.anaphylaxis.org.uk

Alpro soya www.alprosoya.co.uk

Goodness Direct www.goodnessdirect.co.uk