

Cows' Milk Free Diet for Breastfeeding Mums

This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet while you are breast feeding and while your child requires a cow's milk free diet. If you need more detailed advice, please ask your doctor to refer your child to a registered dietitian.

Your baby has been diagnosed as being allergic or intolerant to the protein found in cows' milk. Breastfeeding is the best milk for your baby; however the proteins in foods you eat can travel through your breast milk to your baby. This means that your baby can be exposed to cows' milk protein through your breast milk. To prevent this from happening it is important that all cows' milk containing products are removed from your own diet.

Sources of milk

Cows' milk is found in many foods. Some are obvious such as butter, ghee, yoghurt, cheese, cream and ice cream, but many foods contain hidden sources. When you go shopping it is important to check the ingredients panel of all foods to make sure they do not contain milk.

Ingredients

Cereals(30%)(**Oats**, Rice Flour, **Wheat** Flour, **Barley** Malt Flour), Chocolate (21%)(Sugar, Cocoa Mass, Cocoa Butter, Emulsifiers (**Soy** Lecithin, E476), Natural Vanilla Flavouring, Skimmed **Milk** Powder), Oligofructose, Glucose Syrup, Dried Coconut(5%), Inulin, Vegetable Oils(Sunflower, Rapeseed), Fructose, Honey, Cocoa Mass, Humectant(Glycerol), Sugar, Salt, Cocoa Powder, Emulsifiers(**Soy** Lecithin, Glycerol Monostearate), Natural Coconut Flavouring With Other Natural Flavourings, Skimmed **Milk** Powder, Sodium Hydrogen Carbonate, Calcium Carbonate, Antioxidant(E320).

Manufacturers are required to highlight any allergen, including milk, using **bold**, *italics* or underlined font.

but warning, so it is recommended that you check the label each time you buy a food. You can still eat foods that say 'may contain milk' or made in a factory that handles milk.

Milk substitutes

Milk provides many nutrients that your body needs. If cows' milk cannot be used, it is important that you replace it with a calcium-enriched milk substitute such as soya, oat, rice or nut milk alternative. Rice milk should not be given to children under 4½ years of age but it is fine to include this in your diet whilst breastfeeding. Other mammalian milks such as goats' and sheep milk and their products contain proteins very similar to cows' milk and therefore should also be avoided.

Do I need to cut anything else out of my diet?

It is important to make sure you have a balanced diet so you get all the nutrients you need for feeding your baby. Additionally, including other known allergens in your diet may be protective to your child developing other allergies during weaning. However some babies who are allergic to cow's milk also react to soya, and a small proportion of children have multiple food allergies. It is important you ask to speak to a dietitian if you suspect this may be the case with your baby.



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Vitamin and mineral requirements

When breastfeeding your body requires approximately 1250mg of calcium a day. This can be difficult to obtain from your diet when you are avoiding cows' milk and dairy foods. Using a milk substitute as above, and including other non-dairy sources of calcium in your diet, can help you achieve a sufficient intake.

Sources of calcium in a dairy-free diet	Quantity	Calcium(mg)
Calcium-enriched milk substitute (see above)	200ml / ¹ / ₃ pint	240
Soya yogurt / custard / dessert		
Soya curd / tofu <i>only if set with calcium chloride (E509) or calcium sulphate (E516)</i>	Small pot 125g	150
	60g	200
Tinned sardines (with bones)	¹ / ₂ tin (60g)	260
Tinned pilchards (with bones)	¹ / ₂ tin (60g)	150
Wholemeal bread	2 large slices (90g)	95
Calcium-fortified bread e.g. Hovis Best of Both	Medium slice (38g)	180
Curly kale	3 tbsp (80g)	120
Spring greens	2 tbsp (80g)	60
Dried figs	2 (30g)	70
Dried apricots	4 (32g)	25
Almonds	2 tbsp (25g)	60

As well as calcium cows' milk is a rich source of iodine. This is essential for our thyroid gland which produces hormones that control our body processes, growth and development. Breastmilk can be a good source of iodine however the content will vary depending on your diet. Other good sources of iodine include white fish, eggs and fortified milk substitutes. If your intake of these foods is low *please ask for more information about meeting iodine requirements.*

The Department of Health recommend that breastfeeding mums take a 10µg supplement of vitamin D; this can be obtained from pharmacies, larger supermarkets or health food shops. Many breastfeeding multivitamins contain 10µg vitamin D, 500-700mg calcium and 150-200µg iodine but make sure you check the label as each brand will vary. If you are worried you are still not getting enough talk to your doctor or dietitian as you may require an additional supplement.

What do I do if I want to stop breastfeeding?

Ordinary formula milk is not suitable for infants with cows' milk allergy. Speak to your dietitian or GP if you want to stop breastfeeding to discuss a hypoallergenic formula milk for your baby. This can also be used alongside breastfeeding, and in the weaning diet.



How long will my baby stay on a cows' milk protein free diet?

Many infants do grow out of their allergy to cows' milk protein, usually by 5 years old. Your dietitian or GP will discuss how to safely introduce cows' milk into their diet, usually around their first birthday. This may be at home using a milk ladder or it is sometimes necessary to have a supervised challenge in hospital.

For more general information about healthy eating during breastfeeding please refer to:
British Dietetic Association 'Food Facts' <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home>
The Eatwell Guide <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx>