

Lactose-free weaning diet

This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your child's diet. If you need more detailed advice or if your child is following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer your child to a registered dietitian.

Most babies who react to cows' milk are reacting to the protein content of the milk but in some cases babies do not tolerate the natural milk sugar lactose which is found in ordinary infant formula (made from cows' milk). Lactose is also in breast milk but this is usually well tolerated in most infants. Lactose is also found in other mammal milks such as goats' and sheep milk.

Lactose intolerance in infants is usually a short-term problem often coinciding with colic. It can also occur following gastroenteritis and usually lasts for 2 - 4 months. A small number of infants have a longer term problem with lactose.

Lactose-free infant formulas are available for example SMA LF or Aptamil Lactose Free. These taste similar to ordinary formulas and are available from chemists and some supermarkets to purchase. They are not usually available on prescription unless your baby is under medical supervision as the prices are comparable to standard formula.

General advice for introducing Lactose-free solids

- Solid food should be introduced at around 6 months of age (not before 17 weeks of age).
- Start with a few teaspoons once/twice a day of baby rice, puréed plain fruit and/or vegetables.
- Gradually increase the amount and range of foods to include foods from the 'allowed' list overleaf.
- When your baby seems ready increase texture of food to mashed consistency and finger foods.
- Do not add sugar or salt to your baby's food.
- Honey should not be given until 1 year of age due to possible contamination with botulism bacteria.
- By 1 year of age, most infants can manage to eat chopped up family meals.

Milk substitutes to be used in cooking


If your baby is having a lactose free formula, this can be used in cooking. Alternatively, soya, oat, hemp or nut milks can be used in cooking (choose a brand that is calcium enriched. These should not be used as a main drink until 1 year of age). Please note rice milk is not recommended for babies and children under 4-5 years due to a potential content of naturally occurring arsenic.

Lactose and cheese

Lactose is found in soft cheeses e.g. cream cheese and cheese spreads, mozzarella, feta. However, due to the maturing process of hard cheese, most of the lactose is removed and therefore hard cheeses such as cheddar and edam are usually tolerated on a lactose-free diet.

Can I give other drinks?

The main drink for your baby needs to be breastfeeding and/or lactose-free formula. If other drinks are needed, cooled boiled water is the best drink to give. Baby juices are not necessary and they would just encourage your baby to have a sweet tooth. If your baby is constipated, a small amount of diluted pure fruit juice may help. Tea should not be regularly given to babies and small children as it may reduce iron absorption from your child's diet.

	Foods allowed	Foods to avoid
Fruit and Vegetables 	All plain vegetables and fruit – puréed, mashed and finger foods.* Vegetables mixed with sauces made from milk substitutes. All plain fruit, puréed, mashed and finger foods.* Fruit mixed with soya yogurt, soya cream, soya desserts, custard made from custard powder and milk substitute.	Vegetables mixed with sauces made from cow's milk. Fruit mixed with ordinary yogurt/custard/cream/ice-cream.
Baby Jars/ Packets	All baby jars/packets/rusks which state they are 'milk/lactose free'.	All baby jars/packets/rusks which do not state 'milk/lactose-free'.
Meat/fish/ eggs/pulses	Plain meat/fish/eggs/pulses or in sauce made with lactose-free milk.	Meat/fish/eggs/pulses in sauces made from cow's milk.
Dairy Products	Lactose-free infant formula, soya yogurts and desserts, soya milk can be used in cooking. Hard cheese e.g. Cheddar, Edam. Dairy-free margarine e.g. Pure, supermarket own dairy-free bra.	Cow's, goat's and sheep's milk and all products made from these. Soft cheese e.g. cheese spreads, cream cheese, mozzarella. Ice-cream, cream, ordinary yogurts. Butter, ordinary margarine Chocolate, chocolate spread.
Cereals	Bread (if no milk added) Flour Pasta in milk-free sauces Rice Breakfast cereals (if no milk in ingredients) with lactose free formula e.g. Rice Krispies, Cornflakes, Weetabix. Biscuits/cakes if milk-free.	Bread with milk added. Pasta in cow's milk based sauces. Breakfast cereals which contain milk/ chocolate. Biscuits/cakes that contain milk.

*consistency given appropriate to age

Items to look out for on labels:

Butter fat	Milk sugar	Milk solids
Demineralised whey	Non-fat milk solids	Skimmed milk powder
Lactose	Whey	Yogurt

As from December 2014 all milk containing products must clearly state milk in the ingredient panel on the label.

How long does my baby need a lactose-free diet?

Most babies grow out of lactose intolerance by 6 - 9 months of age. To test this, try giving small amounts of dairy products e.g. ordinary yogurt or food made from cow's milk. If your baby has loose nappies or is unsettled, stop lactose-containing foods and try again in 1 - 2 months.

If your child is still lactose intolerant at 1 year of age, please ask your Health Visitor/GP to refer her/him to a registered Dietitian.

Lactose-free



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