

Milk-Free Diets

Child Health Information

Some people cannot tolerate milk in their diet. This may be due to an allergy or intolerance to milk protein or from an inability to digest the sugar (lactose) found in milk. This information sheet is mainly for those who get problems with milk protein.



Most people who have a problem with cow's milk will also get symptoms with sheep's and goat's milk. This information sheet gives ideas about foods which may contain milk. Your dietitian, health visitor, GP or hospital doctor will be able to give advice about how strict the avoidance of milk needs to be as it will vary with different conditions.

If a child is on a milk free diet long-term they should see a dietitian to ensure that the diet is giving all the nutrition required.

Where is milk found?

The most obvious sources of milk are dairy products e.g. butter, yoghurt, cheese. A lot of other foods also contain milk as an ingredient.

All pre-packaged foods in the UK must declare on the label or ingredients list whether a product contains milk. Supermarkets can provide lists of milk-free products. The term 'non-dairy' used on ice-cream or coffee creamers etc., does not necessarily mean it is milk-free. Check the ingredients list:

Foods allowed on a Milk free diet	Foods to check ingredient labels	Foods to avoid on a Milk free diet
Milk and Milk Products		
Infant milk substitute as recommended. Soya, oat or coconut (Kara®) milk from 2 years old. Alpro® soya Junior from 1 year. Rice milk after age 4 ½ years.	Soya cheese, Soya yogurt, Soya ice cream.	All milk - cow's, goat, ewe's/sheep - fresh, dried, condensed, evaporated. All cheese, cream, yogurt, ice cream, fromage frais, quark, synthetic cream topping.
Fats and oils		
Milk free margarines, e.g. Pure®, Tomor® Vitalite®. Supermarket's own brand of dairy free spread. Pure vegetable fats. Oil, lard, dripping, suet.	Soya or sunflower spread. Salad dressings	Butter, ghee, ordinary margarine, low fat spread.

Foods allowed on a Milk free diet	Foods to check ingredient labels	Foods to avoid on a Milk free diet
Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes		
Fresh, frozen, canned, stewed and dried fruit, fruit juice, and vegetables. Plain crisps.	Vegetable/potatoes in sauce or dressing, instant mash, coleslaw, potato products, baked beans. Flavoured crisps. Corn and maize based snacks e.g. Wotsits, Doritos.	Potato mashed with milk or butter. Cauliflower cheese.
Bread, Cakes and biscuits		
Most bread. Home-made cakes made with milk-free spread. Meringue (no cream) Milk free cakes/biscuits. Icing.	Muffins, crumpets, tea cakes, crackers, pitta bread, waffles. Any biscuits, cereal bars or cakes. Fondant filling.	Milk bread, Naan bread, brioche, croissants, garlic bread, pizza, Danish loaf. Chocolate coated biscuits, shortbread. Butter cream.
Pasta and grains		
Pasta, macaroni, spaghetti. All flour, grains and rice	Tinned pasta (spaghetti) in tomato sauce	Macaroni cheese Pesto sauce
Breakfast cereals		
Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Cornflakes, Frosties, Rice Krispies, Ricicles, Sugar Puffs, Bran Flakes, porridge.	Swiss style muesli, chocolate flavour cereals, Ready Brek. Other cereals (check label).	Special K Instant porridge
Meat and Poultry		
Fresh and/or frozen meat and poultry. Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP) e.g. soya,	Sausages, burgers, tinned meat, processed meat, sandwich and deli ham. Paté and meat paste. Meat coated in breadcrumbs, Quorn products.	Meat in batter. Butter basted chicken/turkey. Meat pies.
Fish		
Fresh and frozen fish and seafood without coating or sauce.	Tinned fish, fish in breadcrumbs, fish paste and paté, fish fingers, fish cakes.	Fish in white cream sauce, fish in batter.
Eggs		
Boiled, poached, fried, baked eggs.	Scotch eggs Quiches	Omelette and scrambled eggs made with milk/butter.
Soups, sauces, pickles and seasonings		
Marmite, pepper, spices, herbs, pickles, vinegar, mustard.	Salad cream, salad dressing, mayonnaise, soup, instant sauces, sandwich spreads, ketchup, stock cubes.	White sauce, cream sauce, cheese sauce.

Foods allowed on a Milk free diet	Foods to check ingredient labels	Foods to avoid on a Milk free diet
Puddings		
Sorbet, jelly. Custard, blancmange, milk pudding made with milk substitute eg soya milk	Fruit pie, fruit crumble, soya desserts, dairy free ice desserts (eg Swedish glace®), lemon meringue pie. (ice cream must contain some milk, ice desserts may be milk-free)	Milk pudding, cheesecake, trifle, mousse, instant desserts, ice cream including 'Non-dairy' ice cream, crumbles/sponges made with butter or margarine.
Confectionary, Snacks, Spreads and other foods		
Sugar, jam, honey, syrup, boiled sweets, marshmallows, lollies. Peanut butter. Plain crisps. Plain popcorn.	Lemon curd, chewy sweets, plain chocolate, mints. Ice lollies. Flavoured crisps	Chocolate spread, milk chocolate, butterscotch, fudge, toffee. Toffee popcorn
Drinks		
Milk substitute eg soya milk Cocoa, milk shake syrup, pure fruit juice, fruit squash.	Drinking chocolate, Horlicks®, Ovaltine®, some drinks with added calcium, milk shake powder.	Instant milk drinks, milk shakes

Reintroduction of milk into the diet

Many children with a milk allergy or intolerance will outgrow this as they get older. Milk intolerance can be temporary after an infection. Your doctor or dietitian will advise you if they think that it is safe to retry milk. This should be done very gradually. The RUH has a separate information sheet about doing this.

Lactose-free diet

Some people cannot digest the lactose in milk. This tends to cause symptoms such as excess wind, abdominal pain or diarrhoea. Lactose intolerance does not cause rashes, wheeze or swelling as might happen with a milk protein allergy.

People with lactose intolerance can usually tolerate small amounts of lactose without getting any symptoms. They can also usually tolerate cheese and yoghurt better than plain milk as the fermenting bacteria reduce the amount of lactose present. Lactic acid is not made from milk and so is allowed.

There are specific products available from supermarkets and health food shops for people with lactose intolerance. These include lactose free milk and butter. These products can be very useful for those with lactose intolerance. They are not suitable for those with milk allergy.

The RUH has a separate leaflet about lactose-free diets – ask your health professional if you would like to see this.