

# Could it be Cow's Milk Allergy?

How do I find out if my infant has Cow's Milk Allergy?





## What is Cow's Milk Allergy?

Cow's Milk Allergy is the most common food allergy in infants and young children in the UK. Symptoms can occur immediately after feeding in which case you will need to seek immediate medical advice or can be delayed for up to a couple of days later. Cow's Milk Allergy can occur in formula fed or breast fed infants. This leaflet focuses on delayed Cow's Milk Allergy.

### What symptoms should I look out for?

The following symptoms are typical of delayed Cow's Milk Allergy, especially if accompanied by restless sleep or excessive crying:



### How do I find out if my infant has Cow's Milk Allergy?

It can be difficult to spot the symptoms of food allergy – even for your doctor. The signs and symptoms of Cow's Milk Allergy can be mistaken for other common conditions seen in babies and infants.

## How is Cow's Milk Allergy diagnosed?

If you suspect that your infant is showing symptoms of delayed Cow's Milk Allergy, the first step is to visit your doctor to discuss your concerns.

**Your infant's symptoms, medical history and an overall assessment will help guide a diagnosis.**



Most people think of food allergy as a very quick reaction, causing symptoms such as swelling of the lips and breathing problems. Immediate medical help should be sought for these type of concerns. In most cases this is correct. However, some food allergies, such as to cow's milk, can be much more delayed (see symptoms on left).

**There are no tests for delayed Cow's Milk Allergy, so these infants will require a supervised elimination diet usually with your doctor or dietitian.**

## How do I manage my infant with Cow's Milk Allergy?

If your infant receives a diagnosis of Cow's Milk Allergy, you'll need to remove all cow's milk protein (dairy products) from their diet to see an improvement of symptoms. If your infant is breastfed, this will mean removing all cow's milk protein from the mother's diet. If you are formula feeding, your GP will need to switch your infant over to a prescribed formula specifically developed for diagnosed Cow's Milk Allergy. Specialist formulas for cow's milk allergic infants will contain different ingredients, some are completely free from cow's milk protein and others contain cow's milk protein in a broken down form. Your GP and Health Visitor can guide you.

# Questionnaire

**See below questions to consider. Write down your answers and take them with you when you visit your doctor:**

- What are the signs and symptoms?
  - How old was your infant when you first noticed the symptoms?
  - How quickly do symptoms develop after feeding?
  - How often do they happen? Are they the same every time?
  - Do the same symptoms happen each time your infant eats/drinks a particular food?
  - Is there a family history of allergy, especially in parents or siblings?
  - Do you suspect a specific food is involved - either in your infant's diet or the mother's diet if breastfed? If so, how much of the suspected food does your infant need to eat for symptoms to appear?
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## **Preparing for your doctor's appointment**

- Identifying Cow's Milk Allergy symptoms is the first step in providing relief for your infant. So the more you tell or can show your doctor, the better.
- A symptoms checklist and a well-kept symptoms diary will be useful (available to download on Allergy UK's website).
- Photographs and videos of your infant feeding can also be very useful.
- Prepare questions that you might like to ask your doctor.



## Here are some questions that you may want to ask your doctor:

- Could my infant's symptoms be caused by food allergy?
- Is it possible to confirm if my infant has a food allergy?
- Do I need to see a specialist?
- What are the next steps?

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### Important messages from Allergy UK:

- Prompt and accurate diagnosis of Cow's Milk Allergy can lead to early intervention and correct management, taking the misery out of living with this condition.
- It is extremely important to seek advice from a healthcare professional before taking cow's milk out of the diet, as it contains so many important nutrients. Ideally a dietitian should also be involved.
- You can visit Allergy UK's website for information and factsheets on Cow's Milk Allergy, or call our helpline to speak to one of our advisors.
- A dietitian should be involved in your child's care if Cow's Milk Allergy is diagnosed.



**For more help, contact the Allergy UK Helpline:**  
9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday  
**01322 619898** [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)



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