

Why a lactose free diet?

Some babies **temporarily** do not tolerate the natural milk sugar ‘lactose’ which is found in breastmilk, ordinary infant formula (made from cow’s milk), and in goat’s and sheep’s milk. **Lactose intolerance in infants is usually a short-term problem. It occurs most often following a bad bout of gastroenteritis (stomach bug) and can last for up to 2 - 4 months.** Symptoms may include loose and frequent stools, increased (explosive) wind and abdominal bloating.

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

Lactose should **only be avoided** if the symptoms cause significant distress to the baby (e.g. crying, pain, nappy rash etc.) Most babies grow out of lactose intolerance once their gut has recovered.

If your baby is distressed, remove lactose for 2 days [use a lactose free formula/milk and follow a lactose free diet]. If the symptoms improve then continue with the lactose free formula/milk and diet for **up to 8 weeks** to allow resolution of symptoms. To test if the gut has recovered, try giving **small** amounts of standard formula/milk or dairy products e.g. ordinary yogurt or food made from cow’s milk. If your baby continues to have loose nappies **and** is unsettled, stop the lactose-containing food, and try again in 1 - 2 weeks. It will take a bit of time for your baby to regain their ability to digest lactose, so increase the amount **gradually**.

If the symptoms do not improve after following a lactose free diet, please contact your GP.

Lactose-free infant formulas such as SMA LF[®] and Aptamil Lactose Free[®] taste similar to ordinary formulas and can be bought in a pharmacy or supermarket, they are not available on prescription. Until the age of 1, it is important that your baby drinks at least 600ml (20 ounces) a day of a lactose-free formula to receive sufficient nutrients, especially calcium. If your baby is over 1 year, then a supermarket alternative such as Arla lactofree whole milk drink or Alpro Growing Up soya drink can be used.

Can I give other drinks? The main drink for a baby under 1 year needs to be breastmilk and/or lactose-free formula. If other drinks are needed, cooled boiled water is the best drink to give. Baby juices are not necessary. Tea should not be given to babies and small children as it reduces iron absorption from your child’s diet.

Milk substitutes to be used in cooking: Lactose free formula and Arla Lactofree milk as well as calcium enriched soya, oat, hemp or nut milks can be used in cooking (but should not be used as a main drink until 1 year of age). Rice milk is **not** recommended for babies and children under 5 years.

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 has been removed. Therefore, hard cheeses such as cheddar and Edam are usually tolerated on a lactose-free diet.

Vitamin D is needed by the body to absorb calcium. The best source is from the action of sunlight on the skin, however young children should not be exposed to the sun for long. Vitamin D is only found in a few foods, so a supplement is recommended for everyone. *Micrograms (mcg) can also be written as µg.*

Target group	Recommended supplement (SACN 2016)	Do not exceed
Breastfeeding mothers	Equivalent to 10 micrograms /day or 400IU	100 micrograms /day
Breastfed babies up to 12 months	Equivalent to 8.5-10 micrograms or 350-400IU	25 micrograms /day
Formula fed babies up to 12 months	Only if taking less than 500mls of formula/day	25 micrograms /day
Ages 1-4 years	Equivalent to 10 micrograms /day 400IU	50 micrograms /day

	Lactose free foods	Foods to avoid or check labels for 'milk' in the ingredient list
Fruit and Vegetables	All plain vegetables and fruit – puréed, mashed and finger foods Fruit mixed with dairy-free alternative to custard, cream	Vegetables mixed with sauces made from cow's milk Fruit mixed with ordinary yogurt/ cream/ custard/ ice-cream
Meat/fish/ eggs/pulses/ nuts*	Plain meat/ fish/ eggs/ pulses /nuts /quorn /tofu	Processed meat/ fish/ eggs/ pulses/ nuts or in sauces made from cow's milk Some meat alternative (vegetarian options)
Dairy Products	Lactose-free infant formula Lactofree brand products (can be used in cooking from 6 months) Dairy-free yogurts and desserts Hard cheese e.g. Cheddar, Edam	Cow's, goat's and sheep's milk and all products made from these Ordinary yogurts Soft cheese e.g. cheese spreads, cream cheese, mozzarella, feta
Starchy Foods	Bread (<i>check label for milk</i>) and flour Potatoes, sweet potatoes Pasta, rice Breakfast cereals (<i>check label for milk</i>)	Milk breads, brioche Pasta in cow's milk-based sauces Breakfast cereals which contain milk/ chocolate
Others	Any oils, lard, dripping Dairy-free margarine e.g. Pure™, Vitalite™, Tomor™, Flora™, supermarket own dairy-free brands Biscuits/cakes if milk-free	Butter, ordinary margarine Ice-cream, cream Milk chocolate, chocolate spread Biscuits/cakes that contain milk
Baby Jars/ Packets	All baby jars/packets/rusks which do not have 'milk' in the ingredient list	All baby jars/packets/rusks which include 'milk' in the ingredient list

**All milk-containing products must clearly state 'milk' in the ingredients panel on the label.
Most supermarkets will provide a list of milk free foods.**

General advice for introducing solids:

Although not specifically lactose-free advice, more detailed information about weaning is available at www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning

- Solid food should be introduced at **around** 6 months of age, when your baby shows signs that he/she is ready (e.g. sitting up, holding head, reaching for food).
- First foods can include a wide range of simple, unprocessed foods (rice, oats, barley, semolina, peas, beans, lentils, meat, fruit and vegetables).
- Wheat, nuts, seeds, fish, shellfish, eggs and soya should not be introduced until 6 months of age.
- Babies progress at different paces. You can offer different consistencies: smooth, soft, mashed foods, or finger foods. By 1 year of age, most babies can manage to eat chopped up family meals.
- Never add sugar or salt to your baby's food
- Avoid processed foods (foods with more than a handful of ingredients on the label).
- Never leave a baby unsupervised with foods.