

There's no sure way to prevent a food allergy, but you can prevent signs and symptoms by avoiding the food that causes them. If you're breast-feeding and your child has a milk allergy, cow's milk proteins passed through your breast milk may cause an allergic reaction. If this is the case, you may need to exclude all products that contain milk from your diet. Talk to your doctor if you know — or suspect — your child has a milk allergy and has allergy signs and symptoms that occur after breast-feeding.

Sources of milk products

Obvious sources of allergy-causing milk proteins are found in dairy products, including:

- Whole milk, low-fat milk, skim milk, buttermilk
- Butter
- Yogurt
- Ice cream, gelato
- Cheese and anything that contains cheese
- Half-and-half

Milk can be harder to identify when it's used as an ingredient in processed food products, including baked goods, processed meats and breakfast cereals. Hidden sources of milk include:

- Whey
- Casein
- Ingredients spelled with the prefix "lact" — such as lactose and lactate
- Candies, such as chocolate, nougat and caramel
- Fat-replacement products, such as Simplese
- Protein powders
- Artificial butter flavor
- Artificial cheese flavor
- Hydrosolate

Even if a food is labeled "milk-free" or "nondairy," it may still contain allergy-causing milk proteins — so you have to read the label carefully. When in doubt, contact the manufacturer to be sure a product doesn't contain milk ingredients.

When eating out, ask how foods have been prepared. Does your steak have melted butter on it? Was your seafood dipped in milk before being cooked?

While there's no sure way to prevent an allergic reaction to milk, reading labels, being cautious when eating out, and using hypoallergenic or milk-free products can help you or your child avoid an unpleasant or dangerous reaction.

If you're at risk of a serious allergic reaction, talk with your doctor about carrying and using emergency epinephrine (adrenaline). If you have already had a severe reaction, wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace that lets others know that you have a food allergy.

Milk alternatives for infants

Some research suggests that breast-feeding during the first four months of a baby's life instead of giving a standard cow's milk formula can help prevent milk allergy. In children who are allergic to milk, breast-feeding and use of hypoallergenic formula can prevent allergic reactions.

- **Breast-feeding** is the best source of nutrition for your child. Breast-feeding for at least the first four to six months of life if possible is recommended, especially if your infant is at high risk of developing a milk allergy.
- **Hypoallergenic formulas** are produced by using enzymes to break down (hydrolyze) milk proteins, such as casein or whey. Further processing can include heat and filtering. Depending on the level of processing, products are classified as either partially or extensively hydrolyzed. Or they may also be called elemental formulas. Some hypoallergenic formulas aren't milk based, but instead contain amino acids. Along with extensively hydrolyzed products, amino-acid-based formulas are the least likely to cause an allergic reaction.
- **Soy-based formulas** are based on soy protein instead of milk. Soy formulas are fortified to be nutritionally complete — but, unfortunately, some children with a milk allergy also develop an allergy to soy.

Milk from other animals, such as goats or sheep, isn't a good substitute for cow's milk, as these types of milk contain proteins similar to the allergy-causing proteins in cow's milk.

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If you or your child is on a milk-free diet, your doctor or dietitian can help you plan nutritionally balanced meals. You or your child may need to take supplements to replace calcium and nutrients found in milk, such as vitamin D and riboflavin.

TOP 5 WAYS TO HAVE A BALANCED DIET WITHOUT DAIRY:

1. Protein

Adults and teens require fifty to sixty grams of protein daily. Children's needs range from nine to 34 grams, depending on age. People who eat meat even infrequently are likely to far exceed their minimum protein needs. Six ounces of lean ground beef has over 45 grams of protein. It's not difficult for vegetarians to get enough, either. Great vegetarian sources of protein include:

- Tofu (ten grams per serving);
- Legumes like kidney beans, chickpeas, or nuts (seven to nine grams per serving);
- Eggs (six grams per egg);
- Whole grains (quinoa has thirteen grams per serving; wheat and oats have six each)

2. Calcium

Calcium is a vital mineral for building bone mass, and milk is a rich source. Adult women have the highest calcium needs, at 1,000 to 1,500 mg per day, while children require between 500 and 1,300 mg. There are two ways to replace dairy calcium in the diet. The first is to eat foods that have been supplemented with calcium or to take supplements. Common calcium-fortified foods include orange juice, cranberry juice, breakfast cereals, and soy milk. The second is to eat nondairy foods that are especially high in calcium. Some good sources are kale, collard greens, tofu, shellfish, salmon, legumes, and amaranth.

3. Vitamin D

Vitamin D is used in the body to help absorb dietary calcium. Vitamin D deficiency can cause serious disorders of the bones like rickets and osteomalacia. These are very rare disorders, however, since vitamin D can be produced naturally by the body upon exposure to the sun. Ten to 15 minutes per day of direct sunlight is sufficient to prevent vitamin D deficiency. Good nondairy dietary sources of vitamin D include eggs, fish, oysters, fortified cereals, and cod liver oil.

4. Riboflavin

Riboflavin, or vitamin B2, is one of the B-complex of vitamins vital for processing carbohydrates in the body. It has recently become popular as a treatment for migraine headaches, as it has been

clinically shown to reduce their frequency. While riboflavin is available in supplement form, it is not particularly difficult to get vitamin B2 from an otherwise well-balanced diet. The RDA (recommended daily allowance) for riboflavin is 0.5 mg per thousand calories eaten on a daily basis. Leafy greens, sweet potatoes, whole grains, and meat are good sources. Some cereals and breads are enriched with riboflavin as well.

5. Phosphorus

Milk is among the richest dietary sources of phosphorus, a mineral that helps regulate cell function in the body. It is a major component of bones and teeth. Meat eaters should easily get adequate phosphorus in the diet without dairy; fatty fish, in particular, are an efficient way to meet your phosphorus needs. Vegetarians' best options for phosphorus are legumes, which are high in phosphorus but not absorbed as easily in the body as the phosphorus found in animal products. Another good source is bread, especially if the bread has been leavened with yeast.

DAIRY-FREE FOODS:

- ❖ **Fruits and Vegetables:** You may be worried about your calcium consumption if you are eliminating dairy, but vegetables such as kale, swiss chard, broccoli and cooked spinach, are high in calcium that is easily utilized by your body. According to the "Asian Pacific Journal of Nutrition," the calcium in low oxalate dark green leafy vegetables is absorbed efficiently and prevents calcium loss. Fruit and vegetables are also naturally free of dairy and the proteins such as casein and whey, which are the proteins that can cause dairy allergies.
- ❖ **Meat and Eggs:** Although meat does not naturally contain dairy, check the ingredient label or check with the butcher because casein may have been added for its binding properties. Also, if you are purchasing marinated meat, check the marinade to ensure casein, butter or other dairy products were not added. Otherwise, unprocessed meat is a dairy-free, source of protein, vitamins and minerals. Eggs, especially the yolks, are a non-dairy source of protein and fat-soluble vitamin A and vitamin D that can replace the vitamins you may have been ingesting from dairy.
- ❖ **Beans and Nuts:** Incorporating beans and nuts such as Brazil nuts, almonds, cashews and walnuts, into your diet in place of dairy provides you with protein. Raw almonds provide you with a sufficient level of calcium, and walnuts have high levels of the heart healthy omega-3 fatty acids.
- ❖ **Dairy Substitutes:** Some substitutes for cow's milk include rice milk, almond milk, coconut milk and cashew milk. Rice milk can also be used to make rice yogurt. Certain ice creams have a base of coconut milk rather than cow's milk. Some packaged food items such as brown rice pasta are dairy-free, but always check the ingredient list for milk, cheese, yogurt, casein, whey or any other dairy item to ensure you are avoiding hidden sources of dairy.