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Cows milk protein intolerance

Cows milk is one of the most common causes of food allergic reactions in children. If your child is allergic to cows milk, strict avoidance of milk and all milk containing foods is the only way to prevent symptoms. Your baby may have symptoms such as blood and mucous in the poo. They can often be irritable or unsettled during or after feeds. They may not gain weight very well. There is often a family history of cow's milk protein intolerance in another family member (either a sibling or parent).

Alternatives to cows milk

Milk is an excellent source of protein and calcium, therefore it is important to replace it with a suitable alternative to ensure adequate nutrition and growth. The most appropriate alternative will depend on your child's age. If you are breast feeding your baby this will mean completely eliminating all foods containing cows milk from your diet. It will be very important to replace these foods with healthy high calcium containing alternatives such as rice milk products. You can try soy milk based products but up to 20 % of infants with a reaction to cows milk may also react to the soy proteins that will pass into your breast milk.

As many infant formulae are based on cows milk, children under 1 year of age will require an alternative infant formula which does not contain cows milk proteins. This may involve a trial of a soy milk based formula however as previously mentioned up to 20 % of infants with a reaction to cows milk may also react to the soy. The next option is a more broken down formula where the protein from the cows milk is much smaller and does not cause the allergic symptoms. These prescription formulas (Peptijunior, Alfare, Elecare, Neocate) are only available from a paediatrician so you will need to make an appointment to see me if you think that your child may have a problem with cows milk. Sheep and goat milk products are not a suitable replacement for prescription formulas. We may also send a sample of your child's poo to confirm the presence of cells that fight inflammation and blood.

For the majority of children their cows milk allergy will resolve. Half of all children with cows milk allergy will resolve within 2 years and 80% by 3-4 years after diagnosis. We will arrange referral to an allergy specialist to determine if your child has grown out of their allergy by a combination of

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skin testing and food challenge with milk. A positive skin test to milk does not always mean your child will have symptoms when they have milk or milk products, therefore a challenge may be the only way to determine if your child has grown out of their milk allergy. Do not do challenges at home unless instructed to do so by your doctor. It is also important to ensure that your child is having adequate calcium intake and they may need calcium supplementation in tablet or liquid form and I can discuss this with you.