

# MILK INTOLERANCE

Breastfeeding is by far the best way to nourish infants. At some point all children transition to some form of cow's milk in their diet. Babies who have difficulty feeding, spit up, 'cry all the time', etc. raise the fear of possible milk intolerance.

## *What is milk intolerance?*

Most people use this term to refer to milk allergy which fortunately is very rare. It is more common if family members also have allergies, asthma, eczema, etc. Milk hypersensitivity occurs in about 0.5- 1.0% of infants. The remaining 98% have some other explanation: most commonly, a normal transition and adjustment to formula which is self-limited.

As your baby's bowels mature, feeding improves and food is digested more easily. Other possible causes like constipation, colic, infections, etc. should be reviewed with your doctor here at *Caring Family*.

## *What are the signs and symptoms?*

The most important indicator of milk intolerance is poor weight gain. Classic signs include bloody diarrhea, bloating, increased irritability, skin rashes, infections, congestion, wheezing and anaphylaxis (severe generalized allergic reaction- like to a bee sting).

## *How is it treated?*

Trials of soy-based formulas and dairy avoidance are the mainstay of treatment if your baby has a true milk intolerance. Up

to 30% of babies with milk protein allergy will also react to soy proteins. Use of other specialized formulas should only be used after consulting your *Caring Family* doctor.

Avoid trying too many different formulas without discussing it first. Switching formulas too quickly does not allow your baby to transition normally and may worsen or confuse the diagnosis. Specialized formulas may harm your baby if used incorrectly. Substituting goat's milk can also lead to malnutrition because it is nutritionally inadequate alone (it is missing folate). At times referral to an allergist or gastroenterologist may be necessary.



## *I'm breastfeeding but my baby may have signs of milk intolerance?*

It is rare but possible. Cow's milk proteins that cause allergies can be found in breast milk. They get in the mother's milk when the mother drink cow's milk. Dairy avoidance by breastfeeding mothers and careful

review of the baby's diet for other sources of cow protein are the mainstays of treatment.

## *Does my baby need to avoid dairy products for the rest of their life?*

Fortunately, 70 - 80% of milk intolerant children will be able to resume a normal diet by four years of age. Infants should have dairy products reintroduced at one year of age on a trial basis to see if they have 'outgrown' their intolerance. GBG 2-01