Management of cows’ milk allergy

The recommended management approach to cows’ milk allergy is to completely avoid cows’ milk protein.¹,²,⁹ Milk is an important food for infants, so cutting it out from a baby’s diet may put them at risk of poor growth.² If a milk allergy is diagnosed, the healthcare professional can prescribe a hypoallergenic formula, such as an amino-acid based formula (AAF) or an extensively hydrolysed formula (eHF), that is easy to use, palatable, will provide rapid relief of symptoms and enables optimal growth and development.

Formulas not suitable for the management of cows’ milk allergy

**Soy**
Soy-based infant formulas should not be used for the dietary management of milk allergy in infants under the age of six months.¹⁰,¹¹ According to an independent scientific committee that advises the Department of Health, soy-based infant formulas are not routinely recommended because of the high content of phytoestrogens (compounds that mimic the action of the female hormone oestrogen) found in soy, which could pose a risk to the long-term reproductive health of infants.¹² There is also cross-reactivity between cows’ milk protein and soy protein, which means that some infants allergic to cows’ milk will also be allergic to soy.¹³

**Sheep and Goat’s milk**
Sheep’s milk and goats’ milk are not suitable for the dietary management of milk allergy⁶ as these can also cause an allergic reaction in infants with cows’ milk allergy. Partially hydrolysed formula also has no role in the management of milk allergy as they contain intact proteins which can trigger allergic reactions.¹⁴

**‘Milks’ based on cereals**
‘Milks’ based on cereals, grains and legumes (e.g. oat milk, rice milk, pea milk) are unsuitable for infants with milk allergy because they are nutritionally inadequate.
References