

HSC Position Statement

HSC does not support the routine prescribing of Cow's Milk Allergy Formula for patients over 12 months of age

1. Rationale

By 12 months of age, most children with a previous diagnosis of cow's milk allergy (CMA) who have been managed on prescription formula will have completed at least 6 months of a dairy-free diet and will either have progressed through, or be progressing through, the Milk Ladder to gradually reintroduce cow's milk-containing foods. Children who have not completed the [Milk Ladder](#) should transition to a shop-bought plant-based milk alternative fortified with calcium, vitamin D and iodine.

As outlined in Department of Health (DoH) de-prescribing policy¹ introduced in August 2024, there are some exceptions where children may require continued prescription of specialised formula beyond 12 months. These children will already be under ongoing review by Trust Dietetic Services, who will provide individualised care plans and includes children with:

- Multiple food allergies
- A requirement for an elemental diet
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Short bowel syndrome
- Confirmed CMA with faltering growth or poor dietary intake

This decision is supported by HSC Prescribing Guidance for the Management of Cow's Milk Allergy² and is in line with guidance from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN 2023) recommendation 12.4 that *formula milks, including low allergy, are not required by children age 1-5 years*³.

2. Recommendations for Clinicians

- Cow's milk allergy formula should only be prescribed to children over 12 months of age who meet one of the listed exceptions.
- Families of children approaching 12 months of age should be supported with progression through the Milk Ladder.
- Clear communication should be made with families that prescribing of formula will cease at 12 months of age in the absence of one of the listed exceptions.

- Review prescribing for all children approaching 12 months of age to ensure timely deprescribing where appropriate.

3. Guidance for Patients/Carers

Milk and dairy foods provide key nutrients, including calcium, protein, vitamin D, and other vitamins and minerals essential for growth, healthy bones and teeth, and overall health. Children who remain reactive to dairy after 12 months of age can be offered fortified plant-based milk alternatives as their main drink. Most children no longer need infant formula after their first birthday, as their nutritional needs should be met through a varied diet. Drinking large amounts of formula may reduce appetite for solid foods and limit intake of important nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and fibre.

Resources to support parents/carers with de-prescribing include “*How to safely reintroduce dairy products*” Patient Information Leaflet, available [here](#)

Children between one to three years need 350mg of calcium daily: [BDA Calcium factsheet](#) is an excellent resource for identifying good sources of calcium.

4. References

1. [DoH Policy: De-Prescribing of Cows’ Milk Allergy Formula for Children Over 12 Months of Age](#)
2. [HSC Prescribing Guidelines for Specialist Infant Formula Feeds in Cow’s Milk Allergy \(CMA\) and Lactose Intolerance](#)
3. [SACN report: feeding young children aged 1 to 5 years - GOV.UK](#)

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