



Milk Protein Intolerance and Allergy

What's the Difference?

Milk Protein Allergy (CMPA) occurs when a baby's *immune system* reacts to the *proteins* in cow's milk (casein & whey), thinking they're harmful.

Milk Protein Intolerance occurs when baby has trouble *handling the protein* but it's not an immune allergy. Intolerance can cause fussiness and tummy symptoms but isn't life-threatening like true allergies.

Milk Protein vs Lactose

- **Milk protein** is what causes an *allergy or intolerance*.
- **Lactose** is the *sugar in milk*. Babies need an enzyme (lactase) to digest it. If they can't, they get *lactose intolerance*, which is *different* and usually happens in older children — not common in infants.

How We Diagnose in the Office

1. Your provider will review the history of symptoms and do a physical exam.
2. They may recommend any of the following:
 - Stool testing to look for blood
 - Referral to an allergist for Allergy testing
 - Elimination diets — removing cow's milk protein and watching for improvement.

Common Symptoms

Allergic Reactions (CMPA)

Symptoms can vary but might include:

- Fussiness, gassiness, vomiting, diarrhea
- Stools with mucus or *blood*
- Rash / eczema
- Rare but serious symptoms could include: Wheezing or breathing trouble and swelling of face/lips

Timing can differ:

- **IgE-mediated:** within minutes to ~2 hours of exposure.
- **Non-IgE-mediated:** symptoms may appear from hours to days after exposure.

Intolerance Symptoms

- Fussiness during/after feeds
- Gassiness, spitting up
- Soft or loose stools

If symptoms include **trouble breathing, swelling, severe vomiting, or a rash after feeding**, contact us right away—this *could be an allergic reaction*.

How We Treat

Breastfed Babies

- If CMPA is suspected, mom may eliminate **all cow's milk products**.
- It can take **2–4 weeks** (or sometimes longer) for proteins to fully clear and symptoms to improve.

Formula-Fed Babies

- Switch to a **hypoallergenic formula** (extensively hydrolyzed or amino acid based) under your PCP's guidance.
- Soy formula is sometimes acceptable but not for all infants with CMPA; many may also react to soy.

How Long Until Improvement?

- Some babies show improvement in a few days, but **full resolution of symptoms can take several weeks** once milk proteins are removed.

Cross-Reactivity: Soy & Goat Milk

- Some babies who react to **cow's milk protein** may also react to **soy protein** because proteins are similar.
- **Goat milk products** (including some formulas) are *not safe* alternatives for babies with CMPA, because the proteins are very similar and often cause reactions.
- Lactose-free products still contain milk proteins — so lactose-free does *not* fix an allergy.

Will My Baby Grow Out of This?

The good news: most babies *do* outgrow milk protein problems.

Milk Protein Allergy (CMPA)

- Many infants improve as their immune system matures.
- About 50% outgrow it by 1 year of age.
- Most children outgrow it by 3–5 years old

Milk Protein Intolerance

- Intolerance usually improves earlier than true allergy.
- Many babies tolerate milk protein again by 6–12 months of age.
- This often resolves once the digestive system becomes more mature.

Important Reminder

- Milk should never be reintroduced at home unless your PCP recommends it.
- Your child's PCP will guide when and how milk can be safely reintroduced.
- Some children need a supervised re-trial or gradual reintroduction plan.

When to Call PAA

Call right away if your baby has	Call soon (within a day or two) if
Trouble breathing, wheezing, or severe coughing	Baby is very fussy and uncomfortable
Swelling of lips/face/throat	Frequent vomiting or diarrhea
Repeated vomiting	Poor weight gain or feeding issues
Blood in stools, very loose stools day after day	You feel worried or have any other questions
Signs of dehydration (few wet diapers, dry mouth, lack of tears)	

Key Takeaways

- **CMPA is an immune reaction to milk protein**, not sugar (lactose).
- **Intolerance is different** (less serious) but can still cause tummy troubles.
- Removing cow milk protein often improves symptoms, but it may take **weeks** to fully clear out.
- **Soy and goat's milk aren't always safe** substitutes for babies with CMPA.
- Contact us if you're concerned about symptoms.