

Diagnosing Cow's Milk Protein Allergy (CMPA)

(from [NICE Guideline 116](#), [MAP](#) and [BSACI](#))

Cow's Milk Protein Allergy (CMPA or CMA) is the most clinically complex individual food allergy and therefore causes significant challenges in both recognising the many different clinical presentation and also the varying approaches to management, both at primary care and specialist level.

Allergy focused clinical history (adapted from Skypala et al. 2015) - [click here for form](#)

- Personal/family history of atopic disease (asthma, eczema or allergic rhinitis) & food allergy
- Presenting symptoms and other symptoms that may be associated with CMPA (see below)
 - Age at first onset and speed of onset
 - Duration, severity and frequency
 - Setting of reaction (home, outside...)
 - Reproducibility of symptoms on repeated exposure
- Feeding history
 - Breast fed/formula fed (if breastfed, consider mother's diet)
 - Age of introduction to solids
 - If relevant, details of any foods avoided and why
- Details of previous treatment, including medication for presenting symptoms and response to this
- Any response to the elimination and reintroduction of foods

Acute symptoms (minutes)

→ Refer to secondary care

- Abdominal pain / Colic / excessive crying
- Vomiting (repeated or profuse)
- Diarrhoea (Rarely a severe presentation)

- Urticaria
- Acute pruritus
- Angioedema
- Erythema
- Acute 'flaring of atopic eczema'

- Red/itchy eyes
- Blocked/runny nose, sneezing
- Cough, wheeze, breathlessness

- Drowsiness, dizziness, pallor, collapse
- Anaphylaxis

Gut
(Range of symptoms & severity)

Skin
(Range of symptoms & severity)

Respiratory
(Usually with other symptoms)

Systemic

Delayed symptoms (2-72hrs)

→ Refer to secondary care only if symptoms severe

- 'Colic' / excessive crying
- 'Reflux' - GORD
- Blood in stool and/or mucus in otherwise well child
- Vomiting in irritable child with back arching & screaming
- Feed refusal or aversion
- Diarrhoea: often protracted + propensity to faltering growth
- Constipation: straining with defecation but producing soft stools, irregular or uncomfortable stools +/- faltering growth
- Unwell child: delayed onset protracted D&V

Wide range of severity, from well child with bloody stool to shocked child after profuse D&V (FPIES)

- Significant to severe atopic eczema +/- faltering growth

- 'Catarrhal' airway symptoms (Usually in combination with 1 or more other symptoms)

Red Flags (urgent referral to secondary care):

- 🚫 Faltering growth
- 🚫 Severe atopic eczema
- 🚫 FPIES, Anaphylaxis, collapse