

# BRUNCH

Wellness

Milky way



**Suffering from a milk allergy?  
Here's how to cope**

**by Tavishi Paitandy Rastogi**

**A**RPITA WAS a year old when she started reacting adversely to milk. "I would develop rashes on my skin and have bad cramps every time I drank milk," she recalls.

Things got worse each day till the doctors intervened. Various tests revealed that Arpita was suffering from an allergic reaction from milk. Arpita's is not the only case. "It is the commonest food allergy," explains Dr Sandeep Buddhira-ja, head, internal medicine, Max Healthcare. "Basically, the body refuses to recognise milk proteins as a useful protein intake." This may be a common phenomenon, but it is also disturbing. For milk has always been known as a most essential nutrient for all ages.

**HEALTHY WITHOUT MILK**

But, an allergy is an allergy. What does one do if one has an allergy to milk? "Milk is rich in protein, calcium and Vitamins A and B and it is important to ensure an adequate intake of these elements on a dairy-free diet," says consulting physician Dr Ram Kumar.

Experts recommend other substitutes such as soya, which is rich in protein, and other foods like potatoes, vegetable oil and fish for adults. Cod liver oil or fish oils are rich in vitamin A, say doctors.

"Watercress, figs, almonds and other nuts besides fresh fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins and minerals. They are especially important for children as they help in the formation of strong, healthy teeth and bones," explains Dr Buddhiraja. "Besides, there are a number of other milks that are available that are a good substitute for people with milk allergies. Rice milk is good for drinking and using in cereal for both children and adults. In some food preparations, water, broth or juice can be substituted for cow's milk. Soy and oat milk also have similar benefits," he adds.

**DAIRY-FREE DIET**

In case of adults and especially women, nursing mothers and older people, calcium is an important requirement. "Bones are living growing tissues and need plenty of calcium for growth and repair. Dairy products form the major sources of calcium in the diet," says Dr Kumar. At least four servings every day of low-fat dairy products such as low-fat milk, yoghurt, cottage cheese, etc., are a must, say experts.

But milk-allergic people need to find other sources of calcium. Says Dr Kumar, "Non-dairy drinks such as juices fortified with calcium are available in the market. Calcium-rich vegetables include dark green vegetables such as broccoli, kale and collard greens. Spinach too is rich in calcium." Non-vegetarians can opt for fish with soft, edible bones and seafood.

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Symptoms



- Itchy red rash, hives, eczema, swelling of lips, mouth, tongue, face or throat
- Abdominal pain and bloating, diarrhoea, vomiting, gas, cramps
- Runny nose, sneezing, watery, itchy eyes, coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath