

An ESPGHAN Position Paper on the Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of Cow's Milk Allergy

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A previous guideline on cow's milk allergy (CMA) developed by the European Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (ESPGHAN) was published in 2012. This position paper provides an update on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of CMA with focus on gastrointestinal manifestations. All systematic reviews and meta-analyses regarding prevalence, pathophysiology, symptoms, and diagnosis of CMA published after the previous ESPGHAN document were considered. Medline was searched from inception until May 2022 for topics that were not covered in the previous document. After reaching consensus on the manuscript, statements were formulated and voted on each of them with a score between 0 and 9. A score of ≥ 6 was arbitrarily considered as agreement. Available evidence on the role of dietary practice in the prevention, diagnosis, and management of CMA was updated and recommendations formulated. CMA in exclusively breastfed infants exists, but is uncommon and suffers from over-diagnosis. CMA is also over-diagnosed in formula and mixed fed infants. Changes in stool characteristics, feeding aversion, or occasional spots of blood in stool are common and in general should not be considered as diagnostic of CMA, irrespective of preceding consumption of cow's milk. Over-diagnosis of CMA occurs much more frequently than under-diagnosis; both have potentially harmful consequences. Therefore, the necessity of a challenge test after a short diagnostic elimination diet of 2–4 weeks is recommended as the cornerstone of the diagnosis. This position paper contains sections on nutrition, growth, cost, and quality of life.

What Is Known

- Cow's milk allergy (CMA) is mostly a disease of infancy and early childhood.
- Although both over- and under-diagnosis do occur, over-diagnosis is more frequent; both are associated with potentially long-term negative health consequences.
- A previous guideline on CMA developed by European Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition was published in 2012.

What Is New

- Available evidence on the role of dietary practice in the prevention, diagnosis, and management of CMA was updated and recommendations formulated.
- The impact of CMA on nutrition, growth, cost, and quality of life is discussed.
- The roles of hydrolysed rice formula, soy, and vegetable infant feeds in the diagnostic and therapeutic approaches to CMA are discussed.