

Common Food Allergies

An Overview

The Basics:



Food allergies affect a growing number of children. Reactions to allergens in food range from a simple response like a tingling sensation in the mouth, to symptoms that are more severe including swelling of the tongue and the throat, difficulty breathing, hives, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, drop in blood pressure, loss of consciousness, and possibly death. Symptoms typically appear within minutes to two hours after exposure. Because food allergies have the potential to be quite dangerous, the following information is important for all parents and caregivers to be aware of.

Although people can be allergic to any food product, there are eight food ingredients which account for 90% of all food-allergic reactions. This list includes: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy and wheat.



Getting Started:

- Get Educated
 - The amount of information that needs to be understood to safely manage your child's food allergy is great. Luckily, there are tremendous resources right at your fingertips.
 - Visit www.foodallergy.org, the web site for The Food Allergy and Anaphalaxis Network or call FAAN at (800) 929-4040.
 - Links to books, lists, shopping tips, etc...to help you adapt your diet to your child's needs.
- When buying from the store, follow these guidelines:
 - Do not buy from bulk bins. You don't know what is in the product, or what was in the bin previously. Scoops get moved from bin to bin. Avoid bulk bags of food that have no ingredient labeling.
 - Don't purchase baked goods from bakeries or donut shops where the food has been sitting with other goods under the same glass display.
 - The best "baked" snacks from the store are cookies, crackers and cereals that are well labeled and tightly packaged.



- Avoid cross-contamination:
 - Cross-contamination occurs when a safe food comes in contact with a food allergen such as peanut, nuts, seafood or milk. For those with severe food allergies, eating even the slightest trace of an allergic food can cause a potentially life threatening or fatal reaction. Although not everyone with food allergy is this sensitive, it's still important to be very careful and follow precautions.

