

## Food allergy in children



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A major stressor for parents is when they have a child who suffers from a food allergy. Numerous questions arise such as does the child suffer from other food allergies, treatment, and will the allergy be outgrown. Other problems arise if the child is school aged and issues with the schools.

Most food allergies can be attributed to cow's milk, eggs, peanuts, soy, wheat, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish. Some children can eat a fair amount of the food before an allergic reaction occurs while others react after a small bite. Symptoms can vary from mild throat irritation or rash to a life-threatening reaction known as anaphylaxis.

Symptoms of a food allergy or anaphylaxis can include itching or swelling of the mouth, lips, tongue; rash/hives; stomach pain, diarrhea, vomiting; cough, wheezing, difficulty breathing. In cases of anaphylaxis, loss of consciousness and drop in blood pressure may occur.

In diagnosing a food allergy a good history of when the reaction occurred and what symptoms were noticed is very important. Many times a parent will tell me that their child took a bite of a peanut butter cookie or peanut butter sandwich and shortly after suffered a facial rash or that the child spit the food out immediately. The next step in diagnosing a food allergy would be to do a blood test or a skin test to the suspected food. These tests only indicate that a food may have caused the allergic reaction and a confirmatory oral challenge in the doctor's office maybe recommended.

If your child is allergic to a food strict avoidance of the food is necessary. Parents are prescribed an EpiPen which allows self administration of epinephrine if accidental ingestion occurs. It is now recommended that if a child accidentally eats a food that is known to cause an allergic reaction that the EpiPen be immediately administered. Benadryl is no longer considered to be first-line therapy.

Many food allergies that start in childhood, with strict avoidance of the food, will be tolerated as they get older. Allergy to peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, and fish are considered to be life long.

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For an appointment, please call 522-4310  
For Physician Referrals, call 522-4444  
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