

NUTRIFAX[©]

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Food Allergies – The Body’s Resistance to Food

A food allergy is an abnormal response of the body’s immune system to certain foods. Fortunately, food allergies are not as common as most people think, but they certainly are a problem for those few who endure them.

Regardless of severity, researchers think up to 5% of children have potentially life threatening food allergies. It is also believed that 50% of allergies are not “outgrown.” Food allergies occur in individuals who are genetically susceptible, and are often seen in those who have a family history of asthma, hay fever, and eczema. Most food allergies become evident in early childhood by age three.

Symptoms of food allergy are individualistic and vary in degree of severity, time of onset, and amount of food eaten. Allergy symptoms may appear as early as 1 to 15 minutes after eating or can develop over a period of hours. Mild food allergies may result in a rash, swelling, itching, or gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea or cramping. Anaphylaxis is most severe reaction to food. Symptoms are hives, difficult breathing, and loss of consciousness. Anaphylaxis requires immediate medical attention.

Treatment of a food allergy is eliminating the offending food. If you or your child has been diagnosed by a physician as having a specific food allergy, you need to become an alert and educated consumer. Allergenic foods often turn up in unexpected places using unexpected names. For example, peanut and soy products are used in a great number of foods that give no indication by the name of the product.

Parents should teach their child what foods to avoid and stress the importance of not sharing food with other children. It is recommended that parents identify an adult in the cafeteria setting who is aware of the allergy and can assist in choosing safe menus.

Parents may find information and support from:
THE FOOD ALLERGY NETWORK
10400 Eaton Place, Suite 107
Fairfax, Virginia 22030-2208
Email: fan@worldweb.net
World Wide Web: www.foodallergy.org

CONDITIONS LINKED TO FOOD ALLERGIES BUT WHICH ARE NOT:

Lactose Intolerance — Milk can certainly cause problems with people who lack the enzyme to digest milk sugar. This condition is really not a food allergy but is a metabolic disorder.

Diabetes — This condition is also a metabolic disorder, resulting in the body not handling sugar properly due to lack of insulin. It is not an allergy to sugar.

Hyperactivity — Past practices have linked certain foods such as sugar to a child’s very active behavior; however, considerable research has been unable to prove the link.

Arthritis — At this time no research has shown that any one food will aggravate arthritis. Unfortunately, you will not obtain relief by eliminating or adding certain foods to and from your diet.

Which foods appear to cause the most allergies?			
Adults		Children	
Seafood	50%	Eggs	28%
Peanuts	40%	Milk	25%
Other Foods	10%	Peanuts	20%
		Soy	8%
		Wheat	5%
		Fish	3%

Food and Nutrition Services can assist in providing nutrition information. Call 703-813-4800 and ask for a Registered Dietitian.

The ingredient list on FCPS web site can be found at: http://www.fcps.edu/fs/food/food_at_school/ingredientanalysis.pdf.

READ LABELS FOR INGREDIENTS AND BY-PRODUCTS OF OFFENDING FOODS.