

Food Allergy

What is Food Allergy?

A food allergy is an immune system reaction to a food. A food allergen is an ingredient or chemical in a food that causes your immune system to react. Allergic reactions happen when your immune system fights too strongly against an allergen and causes you to get sick. Allergic reactions can happen within minutes to several hours after you eat, touch, or smell the food.

What increases my risk for a food allergy? .

- A food allergy can develop at any time. Many children outgrow their allergies to milk, wheat, and egg by late childhood. Food allergies that develop in adults often do not go away.
- Food allergies often begin in children aged 2 years or younger, more commonly in boys. The risk is also greater if a close family member has a food allergy. You are more likely to have food allergies if you also have eczema, hay fever, or asthma.

What are the most common food allergies?

- ✓ Nuts
- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Fish and shellfish
- ✓ Fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Milk
- ✓ Soy or Wheat

How are food allergies diagnosed?

- **A skin prick test** is used to check for an allergy to certain foods. Your healthcare provider will scratch tiny bits of different foods under your skin. If a bump appears within a few minutes, you likely have an allergy to that food.
- **Blood tests** may be used to find antibodies that lead to food allergies. An antibody is part of your immune system.
- **An elimination diet** is used to help you avoid a food for several weeks to see if your symptoms get better.
- **Food challenge** means you eat small amounts of foods that you may be allergic to. A healthcare provider stays with you to watch for and treat any allergic reactions.

How is an allergic reaction to food treated?

- **Antihistamines** decrease mild symptoms such as itching or a rash.
- **Epinephrine** is used to treat severe allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis.

Reference: Micromedex's Care Notes System Online 2.0