



# Food Allergies

## Background:

- “Food allergy is a group of disorders distinguished by the way the body’s immune system responds to specific food proteins”. (Food Allergy-Overview, 2006)
- Many more people have a food intolerance, which is an unpleasant reaction to food that doesn’t involve the immune system. (Food Allergy, 2006)
- Typically, symptoms appear within minutes to two hours after the person has eaten the food that he or she is allergic to. (Food Allergy-Key Facts, 2006)
- “Symptoms of food allergies range from a tingling sensation in the mouth, swelling of the tongue and the throat, difficulty breathing, hives, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, drop in blood pressure, loss of consciousness, to death”. (Food Allergy, 2006)
- When someone who is allergic to peanuts comes in contact with peanut butter they are more likely to experience a severe reaction.
- Common causes of food-related problems include:
  - “Absence of an enzyme needed to fully digest a food.”
    - For example, some people have difficulty digesting lactose, the main sugar in milk products.
      - This intolerance can cause bloating, cramping, diarrhea and excess gas”. (Food Allergy-Causes, 2006)
  - Irritable bowel syndrome.
    - Certain foods may trigger the signs and symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.
      - They may cause cramping, constipation or diarrhea. (Food Allergy-Causes, 2006)
  - Food contaminated by a toxin.
    - Sometimes food poisoning can mimic an allergic reaction
      - Sometimes mushrooms can be toxic (Food Allergy-Causes, 2006).
  - Recurring stress or psychological factors.



- Sometimes the mere thought that a food may make you sick actually does, this concept is not fully understood.

### Peanut Allergy



- “Some hidden sources of peanuts are:
  - Artificial nuts can be peanuts that have been deflavored and reflavored with a nut, such as pecan or walnut.
  - Arachis oil is peanut oil.
  - African, Chinese, Indonesian, Mexican, Thai and Vietnamese dishes often contain peanuts, or are contaminated with peanuts during preparation process. Additionally, foods sold in bakeries and ice cream shops are often in contact with peanuts.
  - Many brands of sunflower seeds are produced on equipment shared with peanuts”. (Tips for Managing a Peanut Allergy, 2006)
- Although once considered to be a lifelong allergy, recent studies indicate that up to 20 percent of children diagnosed with peanut allergy outgrow it. (Tips for Managing a Peanut Allergy, 2006)
- “Possible symptoms of reaction to peanuts may include:
  - Sense of fear or apprehension
  - Flushed face, hives, swollen or itchy lips, mouth, eyes, or tongue
  - Difficulty breathing or swallowing, drooling
  - Running nose, voice change
  - Dizziness, unsteadiness, sudden fatigue, rapid heartbeat, chills”. (What you need to know, 2004)

### Milk Allergy



- Fortunately, milk is one of the easiest ingredients to substitute in baking and cooking.
- “Some hidden sources of milk:
  - Deli meat slicers are frequently used for both meat and cheese products.
  - Many restaurants put butter on steaks after they have been grilled to add extra flavor. The butter is not visible after it melts”. (Tips for Managing a Milk Allergy, 2006)
- “Possible symptoms of reaction to milk may include:
  - Skin reactions:
    - Itchy red rash, hives, eczema, black eyes, and swelling of the lips, mouth, tongue, face or throat.
  - Digestive System reactions:
    - Nausea, vomiting, gas, bloating

- Respiratory System reactions:
  - Runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes, itchy eyes, nasal congestion, shortness of breath.
- Some children may have reddish ear lobes or a glazed look in their eyes.
- Other symptoms that may be attributed to milk allergy are bed wetting, lethargy, and inattentiveness”. (An Immune System’s Response to Milk Proteins, 2006)

### **Statement of the Problem:**

- “Some companies do not use complete or adequate labeling of their foods and packages, which can be very dangerous to someone with an allergy”. (Food Allergy-Key Facts)
- Restaurants, schools, lunchrooms, personnel, etc can be ignorant with handling food allergy problems. (Food Allergy-Key Facts) (Most schools do not allow special snacks with any kind of peanut in them).
- Sometimes medications or resuscitation equipment is not available which could save someone’s life.
- Some places have gone to the extreme by altering peanuts and then selling them as walnuts, almonds or pecans. (This can make people very ill).
- People fail to understand that a minimal amount of peanut material can kill someone.

### **Epidemiologic Picture:**

- “Peanut and/or tree nut (walnut, almond and cashew) allergy affects about three million Americans, or 1.1% of the population”. (Food Allergy-New Research, 2006)
- “Approximately 150 people in the United States die each year from food-related anaphylaxis”. (Food Allergy-New Research, 2006)
- “Eight percent of children younger than six years experience food intolerances. Of this group, 2 to 4% appear to have allergic reactions to food. In adults, an estimated 1 to 2% are sensitive to food”. (Food Allergy-New Research, 2006)

- In children, the following six foods cause the majority of food allergy reactions: milk, egg, peanuts, wheat, soy, and tree nuts. (Food Allergy-New Research, 2006)
- Children often outgrow an allergy to eggs, milk, wheat and soy. (Food Allergy-Key Facts & Statistics, 2006)
- Most children outgrow their food allergies by the time they start school. (Food Allergy, 2006)
- Peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish are four foods that most adults suffer lifelong allergic reactions from. (Food Allergy, 2006)
- If allergies such as hay fever, asthma or hives are common in your family, you are at higher risk do develop a food allergy. (Food Allergy, 2006)
- “Food allergies are most common in children, especially toddlers and infants.
  - As you grow older, your digestive tract matures, and your body is less likely to absorb food components that trigger allergies” (Food Allergy, 2006).

## Solutions:

- **Treatment** ([www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com))
  - “The only true way to avoid allergic reaction is to avoid foods that cause signs and symptoms.
  - Even with your best efforts you can still come in contact with a food.
    - This is why some people need an emergency injection of adrenaline (epinephrine) and a trip to the emergency room.
    - Some people have to carry the injectable epinephrine with them at all times.
    - For less severe allergies, you can get a drug that will control a reaction and help relieve discomfort.” (Food Allergy, 2006)
- **Preventing children from developing food allergies** ([www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com))
  - “Watch your diet during pregnancy.
    - Consider cutting out peanuts while you’re pregnant, especially if you have a family history of food allergies.
  - Wait on foods that are common causes of allergies.
    - Put off cow’s milk until baby’s first birthday.
    - Introduce eggs at 2.
    - And don’t offer peanuts, nuts or fish until age 3.
  - Don’t introduce solid foods to early.
    - Try to wait until six months before giving baby solid foods.
  - Breast-feed your baby

- If possible breast-feed your baby exclusively for four to six months. The breast milk can help prevent food allergies”. (Food Allergy, 2006)
- **Allergies Causes & Solutions** ([www.healingdaily.com](http://www.healingdaily.com))
  - “Dr. William Philpott, in his book "Victory Over Diabetes", recommends the rotation of digestive enzymes on a 4-day cycle. This can be accomplished by using pancreatin (from pork and beef), plant enzymes (from *Aspergillus oryzae*), bromelain (from pineapple), and papain (from papaya). Bromelain and papain are active in the digestion of protein only. Studies have shown them to be much less potent than pancreatin.
  - Vitamin C is a general anti-allergy vitamin. We experience allergic symptoms when an allergen-antibody complex causes many cells to release histamine and other allergy mediating chemicals. Vitamin C helps to stabilize mast cells so they are less likely to release these substances.
  - In October 2002, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reported that Pfizer's blockbuster antihistamine drug "Zyrtec" had gained a supplemental U.S. approval for use in children as young as 6 months old. Zyrtec (cetirizine hydrochloride), which is currently indicated to relieve symptoms of allergic rhinitis - nasal inflammation - and to treat itching and hives in adults and in children age 2 and older, has been cleared for those 2 indications in children 6 months and older”. (Food Allergy, 2006)

### Internet Resources:

- Patient/Public Education: Fast Facts. *Food Allergy*.  
[http://www.aaaai.org/patients/resources/fastfacts/food\\_allergy.htm](http://www.aaaai.org/patients/resources/fastfacts/food_allergy.htm)
- Help and Hope for Those With Food Allergies  
<http://www.food-allergy.org/>

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