

Allergies & Nutrition

We know that what we eat can affect everything, from our complexion to our heart health. The subject of allergies is a very sensitive issue (no pun intended), as it concerns eating habits. What is an allergy? It is simply a hypersensitive reaction to a particular allergen. For the purposes of this article we will discuss food allergies, because nutrition is our main concern.

Food Allergy

Food allergy is an abnormal response to food that is triggered by a specific reaction in the immune system and expressed by certain, often characteristic symptoms.

Food Allergy at a Glance

- Food allergies are not common, but can be serious.
- Food allergies differ from food intolerance, which is far more common.
- The more frequent types of food allergies in adults differ from those in children.
- Children can outgrow their food allergies, but adults usually do not.
- The diagnosis of a food allergy is made with a detailed history, the patient's diet diary, or an elimination diet.
- Food allergy is treated primarily by dietary avoidance.

Diagnosis

The doctor makes this assessment with the help of a detailed history from the patient. He or she then confirms the diagnosis by the more objective skin tests, blood tests, or food challenges.

Treatment

- **Dietary avoidance:** Avoiding the offending allergen in the diet is the primary treatment for a food allergy. Once a food to which the patient is sensitive has been identified, that food must be removed from the diet. To do this, affected people need to read lengthy, detailed lists of ingredients on the label for each food they consider eating.
- **Treating an anaphylactic reaction:** People with severe food allergies must be prepared to treat an anaphylactic reaction. Even those who know a lot about their own allergies can either make an error or be served food that does not comply with their instructions. To protect

themselves, people who have had anaphylactic reactions to a food should wear medical alert bracelets or necklaces stating that they have a food allergy and that they are subject to severe reactions. These individuals should also always carry a syringe of adrenaline, obtained by prescription from their doctors, and be prepared to self-administer if they think they are developing an allergic reaction.

Most Common Food Allergies

In theory, any food can cause a food allergy. But in fact just a handful of foods are to blame for 90% of allergic reactions to food. These foods are known as the “big eight.” They are:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Peanuts (ground nuts)
- Nuts from trees (including Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, almonds and walnuts)
- Fish
- Shellfish (including mussels, crab and shrimps)
- Soy
- Wheat

In children, most allergic reactions to food are to milk, peanuts, nuts from trees, eggs, soy and wheat. Most children grow out of most allergic reactions to food in early childhood. In adults, most allergic reactions are to peanuts, nuts, fish, shellfish, citrus fruit and wheat.

All-natural, chemically pure foods put those who suffer from allergies at less risk than from processed foods, which may have been cross-contaminated or contain undisclosed ingredients.

Supplementation

Food allergies will eliminate certain foods and their nutrients as a whole, which can lead to dietary deficiencies. This is where supplementation can be used to ensure that one is getting the required nutrients to remain healthy. Make sure they are manufactured by a company with NPA’s certification for good manufacturing practices. Additional supplements may be recommended by your doctor.

Omega 3 fatty acids from krill or fish oil
Multivitamin