



## FOOD ALLERGIES

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### Food Allergy Causes

- A food allergy is an abnormal immune system response to a food protein <sup>1</sup>
- A food allergy occurs when the **immune system**:
  - 1) identifies a food protein as dangerous and creates antibodies against it; and <sup>2</sup>
  - 2) tries to protect the body against the danger by releasing substances, such as histamine, tryptase, and others, into our blood when that food is eaten <sup>3</sup>
- An allergic reaction usually occurs the first time the new food is introduced
- From there after when the food allergen is introduced the body automatically releases the antibodies causing an allergic reaction

1. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)  
 2-3. [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

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## Food Allergy Awareness

- Strict avoidance of the allergy-causing food is the only way to avoid a reaction <sup>1</sup>
- Reading ingredient labels for all foods is the key to avoiding a reaction <sup>2</sup>
- There is no cure for food allergies <sup>3</sup>
- Studies are inconclusive about whether food allergies can be prevented <sup>4</sup>

1-4. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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## Symptoms

- Food allergic reactions are different for every individual
- Common symptoms include <sup>1</sup>
  - Hives
  - Running nose
  - Abdominal pain
  - Anaphylaxis
  - Difficulty breathing
- Symptoms may appear minutes, hours or days after contact
- Sometimes a reaction to food is not an allergy. It is often a reaction called “food intolerance”

1. [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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## Food Allergy vs. Food Intolerance

- Food allergy is a potentially serious immune response to eating certain foods <sup>1</sup>
- Food Intolerance is an adverse reaction to food that does not involve the immune system and is not life-threatening <sup>2</sup>

Example:

### Lactose intolerance

- Trouble digesting milk sugar (lactose)

### Symptoms

- Might include abdominal cramps, bloating and diarrhea

1-2. [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

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## Common Food Allergies

- More than 160 foods can cause reactions
- Top 8 food allergens:
  - Milk (dairy)
  - Eggs
  - Fish (bass, cod, flounder)
  - Crustacean shellfish (crab, lobster, shrimp)
  - Tree nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans)
  - Peanuts
  - Wheat
  - Soybeans
- The most common problem foods for children are eggs, milk (especially in infants and young children) and peanuts<sup>2</sup>
- In adults, the more prevalent problem foods include
  - Fish and shellfish, such as shrimp, lobster and crab
  - Peanuts
  - Tree nuts, such as walnuts
  - Eggs

1-2. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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## Anaphylaxis

- Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death <sup>1</sup>
- Food allergy is believed to be the leading cause of anaphylaxis outside the hospital setting <sup>2</sup>
- Anyone with a previous history of anaphylactic reactions is at risk for having another severe reaction <sup>3</sup>
- Also at risk are those with a personal or family history of allergic conditions, such as asthma, eczema, or hay fever <sup>4</sup>

1-4. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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## Anaphylaxis

- Signs include:<sup>1</sup>
  - Warm, flushed feeling
  - Tingling in mouth
  - Red, itchy rash or hives
  - Lightheadedness
  - Shortness of breath
  - Severe sneezing
  - Anxiety
  - Stomach cramps
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Airway constriction
  - Drop in blood pressure
  - Rapid pulse
  - Dizziness
  - Loss of consciousness

1. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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## Anaphylaxis

- Treatment options
  - Written emergency care plan
  - Emergency medicines<sup>1</sup>
    - EpiPen
    - Twinject
      - Medication must enter the bloodstream quickly
      - After the first injection of medication you must call for emergency response (911)

1. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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## Facts

- Food allergies affect 2-4% of adults and 6-8% of children<sup>1</sup>
- The most common food intolerance is lactose intolerance and it affects nearly 10% of Americans<sup>2</sup>
- Children are at greater risk for an allergic reaction if they are younger than age 3 or have a family history of asthma and allergies, a genetic predisposition to allergic disease, or elevated allergen-specific serum immunoglobulin levels<sup>3</sup>

1-2. [www.depts.ttc.edu](http://www.depts.ttc.edu)  
3. [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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## WHY SHOULD SCHOOLS BE PREPARED TO ADDRESS FOOD ALLERGIES?<sup>1</sup>

- Responsibility for health and safety of children at school
- Food allergy is the most common cause of anaphylaxis.
- Need for immediate response
- Factor when dealing with other chronic conditions
- Unique social and emotional challenges

1. [www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org)

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## Allergies in the School Environment

- Studies show 16% to 18% of children with food allergies have had an allergic reaction to an accidental contact with food allergens while at school <sup>1</sup>
- 25% of anaphylaxis reactions in schools occur among students without a previous food allergy diagnosis <sup>2</sup>
- School personnel should be aware of how to manage students with know food allergies and should be able to recognize food allergy reactions and symptoms <sup>3</sup>

1-3. [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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## School Responsibility Towards Allergies

- Be knowledgeable about and follow applicable federal laws including ADA, IDEA, Section 504, and FERPA and any state laws or district policies that apply <sup>1</sup>
- Review the health records submitted by parents and physicians
- Include food-allergic students in school activities. Students should not be excluded from school activities solely based on their food allergy <sup>2</sup>
- Identify a core team of, but not limited to, school nurse, teacher, principal, school food service and nutrition manager/director, and counselor (if available) to work with parents and the student (age appropriate) to establish a prevention plan. Changes to the prevention plan to promote food allergy management should be made with core team participation <sup>3</sup>

1-3. [www.nsba.org/foodallergy](http://www.nsba.org/foodallergy)

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## Continued...

- Practice the Food Allergy Action Plans before an allergic reaction occurs to assure the efficiency/effectiveness of the plans <sup>1</sup>
- Coordinate with the school nurse to be sure medications are appropriately stored, and be sure that an emergency kit is available that contains a physician's standing order for epinephrine <sup>2</sup>
- Students should be allowed to carry their own epinephrine, if age appropriate after approval from the students physician/clinic, parent and school nurse, and allowed by state or local regulations <sup>3</sup>

1-3. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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## Continued...

- Be prepared to handle a reaction and ensure that there is a staff member available who is properly trained to administer medications during the school day regardless of time or location <sup>1</sup>
- Work with the district transportation administrator to assure that school bus driver training includes symptom awareness and what to do if a reaction occurs <sup>2</sup>
- Follow federal/state/district laws and regulations regarding sharing medical information about the student <sup>3</sup>
- Take threats or harassment against an allergic child seriously <sup>4</sup>

1-4. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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## Laws and Liabilities

- A life-threatening food allergy can be considered a disability under federal laws<sup>1</sup>
  - ▣ Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504
  - ▣ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  - ▣ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), along with the ADA Amendments of 2008 (ADAA)
- Assure compliance for privacy and confidentiality
  - ▣ Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and
  - ▣ Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)
- Civil rights claim on behalf of student
  - ▣ Follow the laws or parents/caregivers can file a claim

1. [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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## References

- [www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org)
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