

FOOD ALLERGY FACTS

If you have a food allergy, your body mistakenly labels something in that food (usually a protein) as dangerous. This activates the same defense system that fights off invading viruses, like the one that causes the flu. The next time you encounter that allergen, your body goes into attack mode, and you experience an allergic reaction.

THE TWO CATEGORIES OF FOOD ALLERGIES

IgE-mediated

Your immune system makes proteins called antibodies to recognize and get rid of viruses and bacteria. IgE is one of these antibodies. If your body mistakes a food for a harmful invader, it will typically produce IgE antibodies that are tailored to recognize that specific food.

NON-IgE-mediated

Other parts of the immune system react to the allergen. White blood cells known as T cells are thought to be the main actor in many IgE-mediated allergic reactions to food. In this class of food allergy, reactions usually don't begin until hours or sometimes days after eating the food.

FAST FACTS

- ✂ We don't yet know what causes food allergies
- ✂ The tendency to develop food allergies seems to run in families
- ✂ Food allergy is more common in babies and young children than it is in older kids and adults
- ✂ You can still develop a food allergy in adulthood

The most common allergens, called 'priority allergens' in food are:

Eggs
Milk
Mustard
Peanuts
Crustaceans and mollusks (shellfish)
Fish
Sesame seeds
Soy

ALLERGIC REACTION SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Skin

Hives (angry red lumps), itching, rash or reddening of the skin
Swelling in the tongue, face or lips

Respiratory

Coughing, wheezing, trouble breathing or swallowing
Tightness in the throat or chest
Sneezing, stuffy nose, itchy nose or watery eyes

Cardiovascular (heart)

Skin turning pale or blue, dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting

Gastrointestinal

Nausea, belly pain or cramps, vomiting or diarrhea

Other Symptoms

Feeling convinced that something terrible is about to happen
A metallic taste in the mouth

TREATING FOOD ALLERGIES

The main strategy for managing food allergies is to strictly avoid the allergen, so you can prevent future reactions.

Learn how to keep traces of the allergen from accidentally getting into your food during meal preparation and cleanup.

If you have a child with a severe allergy to a food like peanut, your allergy specialist may offer you the option of a treatment called oral immunotherapy.