

# Remedies 4

food allergies

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## Food Allergies 101

### What Is a Food Allergy?

Food allergies exist to a variety of foods. Some foods are more common than others when it comes to allergies, but a person can develop an allergy to almost any type of food. It is a strange phenomenon to be sure. Food is needed by the body to survive, but the body can perceive certain foods as foreign invaders and attack when it is introduced into the body.

Most food allergies begin in this way. You eat something. It could be a piece of fish, a shrimp, or some nuts. As the food comes in contact with body tissues, food gets broken down in the digestive tract, but certain proteins in foods trigger the body's allergic response.

As a result, this allergen triggers white blood cells called lymphocytes to release a substance called immunoglobulin E (IgE). The IgE produces antibodies to the offensive allergen. The antibodies travel throughout the body attaching to special cells on the surface of organs and other tissues called mast cells.

The next time that someone eats that food type again, the allergen proteins are attracted to the antibodies that have attached to the mast cells of the organs. Once the two connect, the cells begin to release histamine. It is the histamine that causes all of the symptoms of a food allergy that occur in the body.

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Now that you know how food allergies work on the cellular level, we'll get into how these microscopic dealings manifest themselves in our bodies. In this report you will learn about:

- \* Food allergy symptoms
- \* Common food allergies
- \* Allergy versus food intolerance
- \* Food allergies in children
- \* How to prevent food allergies
- \* Food allergies in adults
- \* Other false allergies (food intolerances thought to be allergies)
- \* Various ways to treat food allergies

Most food allergies provide a few hours of discomfort for the sufferer but they can become severe. People who have parents with allergies are more likely to develop an allergy to some type of food. You may be experiencing some of these symptoms but they could be the result of a sensitivity or intolerance to food sources instead of a true allergy.

## FOOD ALLERGY BASICS

### Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction

Allergies manifest themselves differently in different parts of the body. Depending on what type of food you are allergic to, the symptoms start at the mouth and nasal passages and work their way down through the body. As soon as the food reaches the tongue and back of the throat it begins.

**Mouth**—An allergy sufferer may begin to notice an itching feeling in their mouth after only a few bites. The mouth, face, and lips begin to swell probably unbeknownst to the sufferer. Other people will notice it before you do.

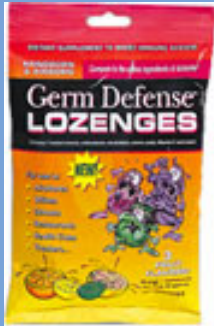
The tongue may begin to swell and cause difficulty swallowing. The throat closes off and obstructs the airway, preventing air from entering the lungs. All of this happens in a matter of minutes once the body has started to respond to the allergen.

**Nasal Passages**—The person could begin to sneeze in response to the food allergy. They may develop a runny nose and itchy, watery eyes. This also happens when a person eats extremely spicy foods so notice if other symptoms not associated with that are occurring before assuming it is a food allergy. It won't be too hard to tell.



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**Skin**—The skin is the largest organ in the body and one of the few we can see. Some patients develop itching and rashes as a result of food allergies. Allergic reactions on the skin are seen as hives. These are tiny bumps on the skin much like goose bumps when we are cold or scared. Eczema is a type of skin reaction to allergies.

It doesn't have to be a food allergy but food allergies can produce eczema. The condition begins as an itch but quickly turns into a rash once you scratch the itch. It is a common misconception that the rash comes before the itch.

**Digestive system**—This is where the real fun begins. People suffering from food allergies may experience a variety of gastrointestinal symptoms. They include vomiting, nausea, cramping, diarrhea, and constipation. Any one of these can occur and sometimes more than one at a time.

**Circulatory System**—An allergy affects the blood as well since the white blood cells (lymphocytes) that produce the antibodies are a component of our blood. In severe cases of food allergy, people experience low blood pressure, dizziness, and lightheadedness. These symptoms mostly occur with anaphylaxis.

## Is it a True Allergy?

People report to their doctor that they have a food allergy because of the symptoms experienced when they eat a certain food. Food allergies are not that easy to develop. More children than adults suffer from food allergies, but most are outgrown by the age of five years old. The allergies that cause more severe reactions usually continue into adulthood. We'll discuss those later.

A true allergic response to food is one that involves the immune system. Antibodies are produced the first time the food is eaten and each subsequent time, a reaction occurs as a result of the histamine release from cells attached to body tissues and organs. There are reactions to particular foods that do not involve the immune system but produce some of the same results.

This reaction is called food intolerance. Every time the food, let's say chili for example, is eaten, the body will go through a series of not so pleasant symptoms that subside over time. With a food allergy, the symptoms gradually get worse.

One example of food intolerance is the inability of the body to digest lactose, the sugar in milk. Whenever dairy products are eaten, the

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person may feel bloated, experience sharp pains and cramps, diarrhea, and gas. While it is an unfortunate situation for them, this is not a food allergy. The body doesn't possess the necessary enzyme, lactase, to digest the sugars in milk.

Food intolerance can be of two forms: toxic and non-toxic. Food poisoning is considered a form of toxic food intolerance. When food is improperly prepared or sits too long and develops bacteria, it will irritate the digestive system.

In small doses the body can deal with bad food. You may get gas or a few cramps but most people chalk that up to the food not "agreeing" with them. After eating a large amount of the bad food, the digestive system is overrun and symptoms like diarrhea, abdominal pain, constipation, nausea, and vomiting occur as the body tries to rid itself of the offending food.

People experiencing major symptoms of food poisoning lose plenty of fluid and may become dehydrated. Rush them to the emergency room for treatment. Besides dealing with the poisonous food, their body fluid needs to be replenished.

Non-toxic food intolerance occurs when foods irritate the stomach but the response is not severe and goes away in a matter of hours. Eating spicy or foreign foods with spices and ingredients that are not familiar to your digestive tract can bring on an episode of gas and cramping associated with food intolerance.

Because this is not a true allergy, the symptoms take longer to show up in the body. The result of a true allergic reaction would be an almost immediate reaction to the food touching you lips.

## Allergy Testing

If you are not sure whether you are experiencing food allergy or food intolerance, check with your doctor. He or she will take a detailed history of your reactions. From there, the doctor can either do a blood test or a skin prick test.

**Blood Test**—The blood test for allergies is called the RAST test. A sample of blood is tested. Doctors are looking for the presence of any antibodies in the blood that correspond to specific foods.

**Skin Tests**—Skin prick tests are a good indicator of the types of allergens a person may be allergic to. The test is performed mostly on the patient's back. Tiny needles that have been exposed to

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extracts of certain foods are scratched against the skin.

If the patient has a food allergy, the skin will become red and a rash will probably form. The needles form a grid that the doctor will use to verify what types of food caused a reaction. All allergic reactions are not the same so a doctor performs the test in case a severe reaction occurs that needs immediate treatment.

## FOOD ALLERGIES IN CHILDREN

### Common Allergies

From infancy to two or three years of age, pediatricians recommend that children be introduced to new foods slowly. They believe that introducing children to solid foods before six months of age puts them at greater risk for developing food allergies. Any allergies that may occur usually disappear by two or three years old.

Pediatricians and scientist also believe that breastfeeding your child for the first six months of life will protect them from most food allergies. This has not been proven conclusively.

Children who are breastfed for six months or longer do gain enhanced immunity from the mother's milk. But, parents may have had allergies as well and heredity does play a part in whether or not the child will develop any type of food allergy at all.

The most common allergies in children are: eggs, shellfish, fish, milk, soy, peanuts, true nuts, and wheat (gluten allergy). They can occur when foods are introduced early in a child's diet. Some like shellfish, peanuts, fish, and wheat don't usually disappear but affect them as adults.

### Atypical Allergies

It is not uncommon for children to have allergies that don't form antibodies. A couple of allergies develop in the intestinal tract. FPIES is a condition that involves food proteins that cause intestinal distress.

Sufferers experience nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea but no antibodies are formed from the encounter with the food protein. The food protein most often involved comes from grains that contain gluten, milk, and soy products. The children overcome the allergy by age three.

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## **How to Prevent Food Allergies**

Who is at risk for a food allergy? In a word, anyone can develop a food allergy. A child with one or both parents who suffered from or still suffer from allergies has a greater chance of being affected by food allergies. The food allergy could be one that fades with time or it could be of a more severe type that continues their entire life.

Delayed Introduction is a method recommended by pediatricians. When a child is old enough to eat solid foods, they are not fed from the table but introduced to single ingredient foods like baby applesauce, strained green beans, sweet potatoes, and the like. Each food is given at least four days before another food is added to their diet.

This method allows a parent to observe the child for any signs of allergy symptoms. If any are present, the food will be eliminated from the child's diet and a doctor consulted about what to do next. In the absence of visible signs, parents may continue to select new foods for baby to eat.

Doctors advise new parents about the kinds of food their children can eat when it is time for solid foods. The foods that are most likely to cause food allergies are the ones recommended for avoidance. Since milk and soy are potential allergens, doctors recommend breast milk for as long as it is feasible.

There are formulas that are soy based if breastfeeding is not an option. Pediatricians don't recommend giving cow's milk to children until they are at least a year of age. Even then, low fat or fat free milk is a better choice than whole milk to avoid any type of reaction to milk.

The other common childhood allergens are not to be introduced until two or three years of age. This also means foods that may contain nuts, eggs, peanuts, and shellfish are on the naughty list.

Some of the most offending foods for children are fresh fruits and vegetables. One wouldn't think that fresh would be of harm but there are more potentially allergic proteins in these foods when they are introduced into a child's diet too early.

The processed fruits and vegetables that we eat have lost many of these substances during the cooking and canning process. So, don't be afraid to give them canned instead.

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## **FOOD ALLERGIES IN ADULTS**

### **Most Common Food Allergies**

In adults, the most common food allergies are the ones that survive from childhood. These are shellfish, fish, peanuts, true nuts, and eggs. True nuts are any nut that comes from a tree like walnuts, pecans, and almonds. Peanuts are in the bean family and quite different from nuts.

These allergies can be mild and cause uncomfortable symptoms like the ones discussed previously. But, they can also be of a more severe nature and cause anaphylaxis which is a life-threatening bodily response to a protein allergen. Anaphylaxis can be triggered by the smallest molecule of the protein allergen that is present. Don't ever think that a small amount of a food is not enough to put you in danger if eaten.

### **Cross Reactivity and Cross Contamination**

These are two important terms that anyone with a severe food allergy needs to be aware of. Have you ever noticed that there are warnings on candy bar labels and other foods that mention the use of certain ingredients in the making of a product? This is for the safety of people with food allergies.

It is hard for people with food allergies to tailor their diets so the offending foods are not included. The situation becomes even more difficult when the full extent of the ingredients in a particular product is not known. No one is trying to hurt anyone. They just don't realize how little it takes to trigger a fatal allergic reaction.

An excellent example of cross reactivity is shellfish. Shellfish means more than avoiding shrimp. There are other shellfish in the sea: crayfish, lobster, crab, prawns, and etcetera. Avoiding shrimp because that is the food that triggered the allergy is not enough. Similar proteins are found in other seafood that has an exoskeleton.

Cross contamination is just that—foods that come in contact with the allergic food and leave residue behind. Take fast food restaurants for instance. You may be allergic to dairy products or nuts. A restaurant that serves items that contain nuts or dairy can't guarantee with 100 percent certainty that those foods didn't come into contact with other items they serve.

The person preparing your burger or fries could have handled some

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nuts when making a sundae or other dessert. Many restaurants post signs on their counter and take-out windows to inform patrons of this fact.

## **Exercise-Induced Allergies**

No, this is not another in a long line of reasons not to exercise. Exercising doesn't produce allergies in that sense. You don't have to worry about puffing up if you use the weight machines or attend an aerobics class. This is a strange occurrence but it can be cause for concern.

Let's say that you ate a bowl of salad filled with tomatoes and cucumbers. You've eaten tomatoes before and nothing seemed to happen. About a half hour to forty-five minutes later, you head to the gym for a workout.

After about twenty minutes of intense exercise, you notice that it is harder to focus because of a feeling of lightheadedness. The skin on your arms begins to break out in hives and you have a funny taste in your mouth makes it hard to swallow. An allergic reaction has begun to take place. The symptoms run from hives to anaphylaxis.

The answer is not to stop exercising but to identify the food culprit and avoid eating it before a planned exercise session. While the food is still in your system, any intense exercise that raises the temperature significantly can trigger the attack.

## **Other Allergies**

There are other reactions that take place in the presence of certain foods but these are not food allergies. They are food intolerance reactions that can get pretty nasty. One such reaction is lactose intolerance. We discussed this earlier. The body is not able to breakdown milk sugars.

Food additives can cause allergy symptoms. It is rare but a while back MSG was the topic of controversy. People developed food intolerance to it and it had to be pulled. MSG is a food additive that seasons food. Today, many foods and sauces that contained MSG are doing without it.

Gluten allergies are a reaction to foods that contain wheat, barley, and rye. It is a cause of intestinal food reactions like celiac sprue that do not create antibodies to the problematic food. Labels now say gluten free so that people with these intolerances can avoid the

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painful symptoms.

Food poisoning is an example of severe food intolerance. If enough of the bad bacteria have been ingested, symptoms like diarrhea, dehydration, vomiting, and abdominal pain may result.

## **TREATING FOOD ALLERGIES**

### **Food Avoidance**

There are some simple ways to treat food allergies that can be spearheaded by the allergy sufferer. Once the food that causes the allergy has been identified, it is up to the person to stay away from any hint of that food. Avoiding the food is the easiest way to accomplish this.

To be sure the food can be avoided in all situations, inform family members, friends, coworkers, and others about your allergy. If it is a common food that finds its way into uncommon places, wearing a medical alert bracelet will prompt people to look out for you.

### **Epinephrine**

Allergy sufferers, whose condition is serious enough to prove fatal, carry epinephrine injectors called Epi-pens. These injectors contain epinephrine, or adrenalin which is a substance that narrows blood vessels in order to restrict blood flow.

Blood vessels dilate during an allergic reaction to allow more lymphocytes to circulate and release their IgE antibodies. Restricting this blood flow slows the reaction throughout the body. It is enough to stabilize a person for transport to a hospital for treatment.

### **Antihistamines**

Just like the name implies, they block the release of histamine from the mast cells attached to the organs and other body tissues. It is the release of histamine that produces the subsequent reactions throughout the body. For less severe allergic reactions, antihistamines given promptly can relieve the symptoms.

## **CONCLUSION**

Food allergies affect a small percentage of the child and adult

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population. Many of the conditions that are experienced are not true food allergies but food intolerances. The reactions by the body are the same in many cases but if they subside on their own, it was not caused by a food allergy.

Prevent food allergies in children by delaying the introduction of foods deemed as potentially problematic. Be on alert if one or both parents suffered from allergies as children or as adults. It is not pleasant to suffer from food allergies so if it can be avoided do so.

Examine the foods that you eat. It could be that spicy foods don't sit well with you and they need to be given up. Food intolerances are treated best by food avoidance.

If you are not sure what you are dealing with, consult a physician. They will send you on to an allergist if they believe a true food allergy is present.

For more information on allergies and other health ailments, as well as a variety of natural ways to prevent and treat them, visit [Natural Holistic Health Blog](#) and [Remedies4.com - Free Natural Health Ebooks](#)