

What is a food allergy?

A food allergy is the body's adverse immune response to certain kinds of foods. The reaction typically occurs soon after digesting that particular food. Even a tiny amount of the allergen related food can trigger a food allergy reaction.

What are some symptoms of food allergies?

Symptoms of food allergies can affect many different parts of your body. A general list of symptoms includes:

Digestive: stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, itching in the mouth

Skin: hives, welts, swelling, itching, redness

Respiratory: coughing, wheezing, an itchy, stuffy and runny nose, sneezing, trouble breathing

Symptoms can range from mild to life-threatening and can appear within minutes of eating the allergen related food. The most severe reaction, anaphylaxis, may cause death.

What are the most common food allergens?

Milk, Eggs, Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Fish, Shellfish, Wheat, and Soy

What does life with a food allergy entail?

Once a food allergy is diagnosed, the only full proof treatment is total avoidance of that food and its byproducts. Meals should be carefully planned to avoid the offending food.

Tips for Success

- Carefully read ingredient lists found just below the Nutrition Facts on a food label. This may take additional time, so be sure to leave extra time for your grocery shopping trips.
- Don't just read a label once and think you'll be ok in the future! Many manufacturers change their ingredients from time to time. Visit our compiled list of vendor contacts if you would like to contact the vendor directly with any specific product questions.
- Read the allergen list, if included on the food label. It often reads "may contain..." These are alerts to ingredients in the product and possible cross-contamination sources.
- Always wash and sanitize any table surface and/or utensil that may have come in contact with food allergens.
- **During holidays, parties, and gatherings:** Offer to bring a few dishes to pass to ensure the foods you eat are allergen free.
- **When eating out:** Order simply prepared items with few ingredients, avoid foods that are fried in a deep-fat fryer that may have been used to fry other foods with the allergenic food, and be aware of cross-contact on salad bars and buffets. Utilize "chef cards" available from the FAAN website: www.foodallergy.org
- **When traveling:** Carry emergency medication with you at all times, pack allergen-free snacks and staple foods, and request special accommodations at hotels/restaurants ahead of time. If traveling on a plane, wipe down seat with disinfectant wipe to prevent contact reactions.

