

Food Allergies and Your Child










One to Six Years

Food allergies are a common concern during pregnancy, breastfeeding, infant feeding and childhood years. This resource will help you make safe and healthy food choices for your child aged one to six years.

What is a food allergy?

A food allergy is the body's negative reaction to part of a food that it feels is foreign. For some people, even eating a small amount of this food can cause death. The good news is that allergic reactions can be prevented.

What are some of the common foods that cause allergies?

Eggs 	Milk 	Peanuts 
Seafoods (fish, shellfish, etc.) 	Sesame seeds 	Soy 
Sulphites (food additive) 	Tree nuts (almonds, cashews, etc.) 	Wheat 
Other Ask your doctor if you think your child is allergic to other foods		

What is anaphylactic shock?

Anaphylactic (a-na-fi-lak-tik) shock is the most serious allergic reaction that can lead to coma and death. It can happen within minutes after eating a specific food. This type of severe reaction affects one to two percent of the population. **It is important to always carry emergency allergy medication (e.g. EpiPen®) for children with severe allergies. Talk to your doctor for more information.**

Breastfeed your baby. Breast milk is the best food for babies. It helps protect against allergies. Health Canada recommends **exclusive breastfeeding** for six months and continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond.

How do you know if your child has an allergic reaction to food?

If your child reacts after eating or touching food, your child may have a food allergy. The reaction can happen right away or it can take time.

Some common reactions:

- Flushed face, hives or skin rash or red itchy skin
- Swollen eyes, face, lips, throat or tongue
- Trouble breathing, speaking or swallowing
- Wheezing, coughing
- Appearing anxious, weak, “faint” or looking pale
- Stomach pain, cramps, diarrhea or vomiting
- Shock or complete collapse (anaphylactic shock) affects one to two per cent of the population

If your child has any of these reactions, see a doctor right away. An allergy doctor can find out which food has caused the reaction and what you need to do to protect your child.

Is my child at risk?

Anyone can develop food allergies. However, your child is at a higher risk if there is a family history of food allergies.

Can my child outgrow allergies?

True food allergies develop during the first year of the child’s life. A child may or may not outgrow food allergies. Allergies to cow’s milk, wheat, soy and eggs may be outgrown. Allergies to peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish tend to be more serious and can last a lifetime. Talk to your doctor to find out if your child has outgrown food allergies.

There is no cure for food allergies. The only option is to completely take away the allergy-causing food from your child’s diet.

How can I be sure that my child has food allergies?

Talk to your doctor if you notice that your child has food allergy symptoms after eating certain foods. Your doctor will help you find out if your child has a food allergy by doing medical tests.

What can I do if my child has food allergies?

- Learn about food allergies
- Read food labels
- Check the ingredients every time you buy a food product
- Avoid food products that do not have an ingredient list
- Do not give foods and/or products that contain the allergy-causing food
- Tell caregivers and schools what foods your child is allergic to
- Avoid bulk bins, restaurant foods and imported foods
- Ask about food ingredients when eating out
- Learn the other names for allergy causing foods. Visit Health Canada:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/allerg/fs-if/index_e.html
- Prepare for emergencies. Always carry an EpiPen®
- Follow your doctor’s advice on how to use an EpiPen®
- Make sure your child wears a medical alert bracelet stating the foods the child is allergic to. Call Medic Alert for more information.

Make sure your child with the food allergy is getting enough nutrients for normal growth and development. Ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian for advice.

For more information

- Anaphylaxis Canada: www.anaphylaxis.ca
- Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: www.csaci.medical.org
- EatRight Ontario: 416-325-0510 or 1-877-510-5102
- Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network: www.foodallergy.org
- Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- Medic Alert: 416-696-0267
- TeleHealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000