

Food Allergy Fast Facts



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for free resources about food allergy.


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Fast Facts

Food Allergy

- 1** Food allergy occurs in around 5-10% of children and 2-4% of adults in Australia and New Zealand.
- 2** The most common triggers of food allergy are egg, cow's milk (dairy), peanut, tree nuts, sesame, soy, wheat, fish and other seafood. However, almost any food can cause an allergic reaction, including fruits.
- 3** Allergic reactions to foods range from mild to severe. Mild to moderate symptoms of food allergy include swelling of face, lips and/or eyes, hives or welts on the skin, stomach (abdominal) pain and vomiting.
- 4** Severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) affect breathing and the heart, and can therefore be life threatening. Most deaths due to anaphylaxis can be prevented by careful food allergen avoidance measures and immediate administration of an adrenaline (epinephrine) autoinjector.
- 5** The most common foods that cause anaphylaxis are peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, milk and egg.
- 6** Most food allergies in children are not severe, and may be outgrown with time. Peanut, tree nut, seed and seafood allergies tend to be lifelong allergies.
- 7** Adverse reactions to foods that are not allergy include food intolerances, toxic reactions, food poisoning, enzyme deficiencies, food aversion or irritation from skin contact with certain foods. These adverse reactions are often mistaken for food allergy, but do not cause anaphylaxis.
- 8** Recent studies have shown that delayed introduction of solid foods to babies (after 12 months of age) can increase the chance of developing food allergies. It is recommended that solid foods are introduced to babies around six months, but not before four months, to help prevent food allergies developing.
- 9** Doctors usually perform skin testing or order blood tests for allergen specific Immunoglobulin E (antibodies). This helps to identify or exclude potential food allergy triggers. Sometimes a medically supervised food allergen challenge is required to confirm or exclude food allergy.
- 10** Dietary avoidance for food allergy should only be undertaken under medical and dietitian supervision, to prevent malnutrition and other complications such as food aversion.

More information: www.allergy.org.au/patients/food-allergy

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