

Transcript for Food Allergies in Children

Welcome to the course for Food Allergies in Children

Navigating this Course

Look for the items below while navigating this course.

Click on the white hand with a red bow icon for additional information or a note to remember.

Click on “Resources” located at the top right of the course player to view the audio transcript as well as all links referenced throughout the course.

Click on the teal icon with a hand icon to take you to an outside website related to food allergies.

About this Course

Food allergies are a growing concern in the United States with an increase in the numbers of children being diagnosed each year. Since allergic reactions can be life-threatening it is important for individuals to understand what food allergies are, be able to identify the symptoms of an allergic reaction, and know how to respond in an emergency situation. This course will provide you with valuable information on food allergies and provide you with tips on how to prevent allergic reactions from occurring.

What will you learn?

You will learn:

- What a food allergy is.
- What the most common food allergies are.
- The symptoms and treatment for an allergic reaction.
- The difference between a food allergy and a food intolerance.
- Tips for managing food allergies at home and school.

What is a Food Allergy?

A food allergy occurs when an individual consumes a food or drink containing a normally harmless allergen that the body’s immune system mistakenly believes will cause harm.

The immune system then creates antibodies to protect the body from the allergen. The antibodies release chemicals throughout the body that cause the symptoms of the food allergy.

Common symptoms can include: itchy skin, skin rashes or hives, watery eyes, runny nose, sneezing, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, rapid heartbeat, and feeling faint.

After the body has developed antibodies to a particular allergen, an allergic reaction will occur every time the food or drink the body is allergic to is consumed.

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What are the Most Common Food Allergens?

The nine foods that most commonly cause allergic reactions in children include:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Fish
- Shell Fish
- Wheat
- Soy
- Peanuts
- Tree Nuts
- Sesame

Keep in mind that although these are the most common allergens, individuals can have reactions to a variety of other foods as well.

Are Food Allergies Serious?

An individual's reaction to a food allergy can range from mild discomfort to a severe, life-threatening emergency called Anaphylaxis.

Reactions can occur within a few minutes up to several hours after the individual has come in contact or consumed the allergen.

It is important to remember that symptoms that seem minor at first may progress in severity if not treated.

Possible symptoms include: Development of itchy, flushed or red skin, hives or a rash; coughing, wheezing, or difficulty breathing; dizzy or light headed, confusion; swelling of the lips, tongue, eyes, or face, tingling feeling in the mouth, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Keep in mind that an individual's reaction to an allergen can vary both in the symptoms that arise and the severity of those symptoms.

Do not assume that if your child had a mild reaction one time that the allergy is not severe, as the reaction may be more severe the next time your child is exposed to the allergen.

Because an allergen may be related to a type of food, all food allergies should be discussed with your physician or allergist.

Anaphylaxis and How to Treat It.

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that progresses rapidly and can result in death if not quickly treated.

Symptoms of anaphylaxis can vary, and may quickly result in the constriction of the airways and swelling of the throat, difficulty breathing, drop in blood pressure, and loss of consciousness.

Anaphylaxis is treated with the use of the medication Epinephrine. If used quickly it can help to reverse the life-threatening symptoms of anaphylaxis.

Epinephrine is administered through a device called an auto injector, which automatically injects a specific dose of epinephrine into the body (typically the upper leg).

It is recommended that individuals with severe food allergies carry two epinephrine auto injectors with them in case of accidental exposure to allergens.

As a parent you will want to make sure that you and your child's caregivers, supervisors, school staff and relatives, have access to the epinephrine auto injectors and are trained on how to use them in emergency situations.

It is also important to teach your child why the auto injector is used, how it is given, and the importance of telling an adult any time he or she suspects an allergic reaction.

If epinephrine is administered to your child it is critical to call 911 for emergency treatment, as it is possible that a secondary allergic reaction can occur.

You will want to tell the emergency responders that epinephrine was given to your child and the time it was administered as well as the allergen that you suspect may have caused the reaction.

Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plans

If your child has a severe food allergy it is recommended to have a Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan in place.

The purpose of the plan is to provide information about your child's food allergies, an explanation of symptoms, and guidelines for treatment such as medication and dosage to those individuals who may need to know.

The plan includes emergency contact information including the medication name and dosage and is signed by both the physician and the parent or guardian. Plans should be shared with your child's caregivers, relatives, and the school staff and nurse.

Downloadable Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plans in English and Spanish are available on the Food Allergy Research and Education website at the following website: <http://www.foodallergy.org>

How Do You Know if Your Child has a Food Allergy?

If you suspect that your child has a food allergy, it is important not to self-diagnose. Instead make an appointment to discuss your concern with your child's pediatrician.

Make sure that you do not allow your child to eat or drink any foods you suspect he or she may be allergic to until you visit with the pediatrician.

At the appointment, share which foods you suspect your child has an allergy to and the symptoms your child has experienced. Keeping a food log may assist you in providing the physician with the details of the allergy such as: dates, times, foods eaten before the reaction, how quickly symptoms appeared after consumption, as well as how the reaction was treated, if at all.

Your pediatrician may refer you to an Allergist.... An allergist is a doctor who specializes in treating food allergies. The Allergist can use a variety of diagnostic

tests to help determine which foods your child is allergic to and the severity of each allergy.

KEY POINT: Remember, allergic reactions can be life-threatening and a child's reaction can vary in severity each time he or she is exposed.

Common Food Allergy Questions

Can my Child Outgrow a Food Allergy?

Some childhood food allergies can be outgrown. Children are more likely to outgrow allergies to milk, wheat, soy, and eggs than they are allergies to peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish.

Your child's reaction and severity to a food allergen might also change over time, therefore regular communication and appointments with your physician or allergist are very important in managing your child's food allergy.

Is There a Cure for Food Allergies?

Currently there is not a treatment or cure for food allergies. Only the symptoms of an allergic reaction can be treated. This is why anyone with a food allergy should carefully avoid all known food allergens.

Prevention and communication are the keys in managing food allergies in your child. This means making sure your child does not come in contact with food allergens in all environments, this includes inside and outside of home as well as school.

Prevention and Treatment of Food Allergies

Is There a Cure for Food Allergies?

Prevention is a critically important part of protecting your child from exposure to food allergies. This section will outline and explain how to prevent allergic reactions from occurring from the exposure to food allergens.

The best preventative measure you can take is to ensure your child avoids all known allergens in and out of the home as well as at school.

For young children consider having him or her wear a medical alert ID bracelet. This can provide critical information to emergency responders about your child's allergy and help guide their response.

Make sure anyone your child spends time with such as teachers, caregivers, grandparents and close friends know about your child's food allergies and have

been trained on how to administer epinephrine and respond in an emergency situation.

Be aware that non-food items, such as paint, modeling clay, and other craft materials, may contain trace amount of allergens that could cause an allergic response in children with food allergies.

A handout with additional information on food allergens in non-food items is available in the resources section of this course.

Reading Food Labels

One of the most important steps you can take to help ensure your child does not accidentally consume a food he or she is allergic to, is to carefully read the food labels on all foods and beverages purchased. This includes by-products of the primary allergen.

For example if your child is allergic to soy he or she should also avoid foods containing soy sauce, soy lecithin, soy fiber, soy protein and soy butter.

The Food and Drug Administration requires all packaged items be labeled to identify if they contain one of the nine major allergens.

How are items labeled?

Food allergens may be stated in one of two ways.

Number one: The food allergens may be listed in the ingredient list. The name of the food source will be listed in parenthesis following the common or usual name of the major food allergen.

Number two: A statement may be included immediately after or adjacent to the list of ingredients, that starts with the word “Contains” and lists the name of the food source from which the food allergen comes.

Where should you look?

You can find the ingredient list on the food label. Ingredients are listed on the label in order by quantity – the earlier the item appears on the list, the more of the ingredient that is in the product.

Make sure to read the entire ingredient list, from beginning to end, as even a small amount of the allergen in the product can trigger an allergic reaction.

Read the label every time you buy the product. Manufacturers may change the ingredients in the product at any time.

What should I look for?

It is important to be aware of any ingredients that may possibly cause an allergic reaction.

In the resource section of the course you can download a handout that provides a detailed overview of potential ingredients to cautious of for each of the nine major food allergens.

Important reminders

Becoming familiar with reading ingredient lists takes practice. Allow yourself plenty of time to grocery shop so you can carefully review the ingredients of all items you purchase for your child.

The food labeling guidelines only apply to packaged food items. The guidelines do not apply to fresh fruits and vegetables, prescription and over-the-counter drugs, pet food and hygiene items that are not meant to be consumed such as: shampoo, makeup, toothpaste, and mouthwash.

The food labeling guidelines also do not apply to food purchased at restaurants, fast food locations, food trucks, or carnivals. If you are unsure, ask the management about specific ingredients that are used in the food or cooking process.

Manufacturers are not required to include advisory statements on their labels about the potential for the food to have been contaminated with a food allergen during processing.

Example advisory statements include: “may contain wheat” or “produced in a facility that also uses peanuts”

However, if the label contains a precautionary statement, the best guidance is to avoid allowing your child to consume the product if your child has an allergy to what is listed.

Managing Food Allergies at Home

It is important to talk to your child about his or her food allergy. Helping your child understand their own allergy is vital to helping your child avoid an allergic reaction.

Explain to your child the foods and drinks that should avoided and why. For example.....when you eat nuts, this is what happens.

Explain why it is important not to share food, drinks, cups, plates, silverware, and straws with others.

Help your child understand what the symptoms of an allergic reaction are.

When talking to your child, describe the symptoms in terms your child will understand.

For example:

Your skin might look red and feel itchy.

You might feel like you cannot swallow or that something is stuck in your throat.

Your mouth or tongue might feel like it is burning or tingling.

Explain to your child why it is important to tell you or another adult immediately if he or she feels these symptoms.

Guidelines for preventing cross-contamination.

Cross-Contamination is the transfer of an allergen from one food to another food, surface, dish, or cooking utensil.

For example, when you make a peanut butter sandwich on top of a cutting board and then use the same cutting board to chop an apple. If the cutting board is not washed between tasks, the peanut allergen could accidentally be transferred to the apple.

You can help prevent cross contamination by following these guidelines.

Wash your hands with soap and water regularly. Make sure to wash hands before preparing food for your child and between tasks in the kitchen.

Talk to your child about the importance of washing his or her hands before and after eating or drinking every time!

Teach your child to properly wash his or her hands.

5 Steps for Clean Hands

1. Wet hands with warm water.
2. Apply soap
3. Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds
Tip – tell your child to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice while washing hands.
4. Rinse hands well with warm water.
5. Dry hands using a disposable paper towel.
Drying hands on a kitchen towel may recontaminate the hands.

Note: Hand sanitizer should not be used in place of washing hands. In the event that hand washing is not possible, carry hand wipes for your child to clean his or her hands with before eating.

Thoroughly wash kitchen surfaces, utensils, pots, pans, dishes, and cups with hot water and soap between tasks in the kitchen.

Watch-out for kitchen sponges and wash cloths, as these can transfer food allergens to clean surfaces. The best practice is to only use disposable cloths or paper towels for cleaning in the kitchen.

Consider setting-up an allergy free section of the kitchen. This is an area where you will not prepare any items that contain foods your child is allergic to. Use color coded cutting boards to identify boards that are “allergy free.”

Clearly label items in your pantry that are allergy-free and safe for your child to snack on. Teach your child to identify safe snacks, and foods that should be avoided.

Cross contamination can occur in the mixing of foods as well. If a food contains a known allergen, do not remove the allergen from the food and assume the item is safe to eat. Even a small amount of an allergen can cause an allergic reaction.

An example of this is not to remove the peanuts from a trail mix and then assume it is now safe for a child who has a peanut allergy to eat.

Do not buy from bulk food bins at the grocery store. Cross contamination can easily occur between bins, especially if the same scoop is used for multiple bins.

Cross contamination can also occur by eating or drinking after another person, as the allergen can be transferred on the lips or in the saliva. Therefore for children with food allergies should not share food, drinks, utensils, cups, straws, or lipstick with others.

Managing Food Allergies While Away Home

Managing Food Allergies while away from home is important in protecting your child from known food allergens.

Plan ahead for events such as birthday parties.

Always let the parent hosting the party know about your child’s food allergy and enquire about the food and drinks to be served.

Offer to bring an allergy-free snack to the party you know your child enjoys.

Ask if it is possible to serve foods that contain known allergens in a separate location and label the items so your child can easily avoid the items. This is especially important for baked goods that might contain nuts, eggs, or other ingredients that are difficult to see.

Know what restaurants serve food your child can eat.

Tell your waiter about your child's food allergies and ask about allergens in different dishes. If the waiter is unsure, request to speak to the manager. Make sure to ask about both the ingredients and how the dish is prepared.

Many restaurants have nutrition information for their menu items available online. Look for this information ahead of time so you know in advance what your child can eat.

Be careful at buffets, as cross-contamination can easily occur between dishes on the buffet. Customers may use the same scoop for different dishes and unintentionally contaminate food items with allergens.

Try to eat at restaurants that advertise allergy-free dishes and clearly label their menus with food allergens.

Even though you are eating out, it is still important for your child to wash his/her hands before eating.

Always carry your child's epinephrine with you when leaving the house, as you never know when an emergency situation could arise.

Check the expiration dates on the epinephrine so you know when it needs to be replaced. Make a note of this on your calendar or set a reminder on your phone.

Carry hand wipes with you, especially to outdoor events, so that your child can clean his or her hands before eating.

This is especially important for outdoor events such as picnics or trips to the park.

When going out, bring allergy-free snacks with you that are safe for your child to eat.

Managing Food Allergies at School

If your child has a food allergy it is extremely important that you notify the school of the allergy.

If the food allergy is severe and is in danger in resulting in anaphylaxis, an Individualized Health Plan should be developed to address accommodations that need to be made as a result of the allergy.

Provide the school nurse with a copy of the Food Allergy Emergency Action Plan from your doctor.

If the doctor has prescribed epinephrine auto injectors for your child make sure two auto injectors are provided to the school for emergency use.

Discuss with the school how food in the classroom, on the bus, and field trips will be handled to ensure the safety of your child.

The United States Department of Agriculture requires that appropriate substitutions or modifications be made to school meals if the child has a disability that restricts his/her diet such as anaphylaxis.

In order to be provided with menu substitutions, the cafeteria staff must have a statement signed by a licensed physician that includes the following information:

- The child's disability
- An explanation of why the disability restricts the child's diet
- The major life activity affected by the disability
- The foods to be omitted from the child's diet and the food that must be substituted

Food allergies or intolerances that do not cause life-threatening anaphylaxis are not considered disabilities. The cafeteria is not required to make substitutions in these situations.

If your child has a food allergy and needs menu modifications talk with the cafeteria staff at your child's school to find out the specific steps that should be taken and the documentation you will need the physician to complete.

Food Intolerances

What is a food intolerance?

So far we have been discussing food allergies, which are caused by the development of antibodies by the immune system to substances within foods.

Food intolerances are negative reactions to substances in food that do not involve the immune system and the development of antibodies.

Intolerances result from the inability of the digestive system to fully breakdown certain substances within food, such as the lactose in milk.

Symptoms of food intolerances usually involve distress of the digestive system, such as gas, stomach cramps, and diarrhea.

Although uncomfortable, food intolerances are not life threatening.

Individuals with food intolerances may be able to consume small amounts of the food and experience symptoms only when large amounts are ingested.

What is Lactose Intolerance?

Milk contains the sugar lactose. When someone has lactose intolerance he or she is not able to completely digest it due to a deficiency of the enzyme, lactase that helps breakdown lactose in the body.

Other dairy products, such as yogurt and cheese, also contain the sugar lactose.

The amount of lactose in these items varies.

Natural cheese such as Cheddar, Swiss, and Mozzarella are lower in lactose.

Yogurt that contains active cultures help to break down the lactose in the yogurt, thus some individuals with lactose intolerance may be able to eat yogurt without symptoms.

Individuals with lactose intolerance experience abdominal discomfort after eating or drinking items with lactose.

Signs of lactose intolerance include: Bloating, gas, stomach cramps, diarrhea, and nausea.

These symptoms typically begin within two hours after consuming foods or beverages with the sugar lactose.

Individuals with lactose intolerance vary in the amount of lactose they can consume before having symptoms. Many people with lactose intolerance can consume small amounts of lactose at a time and do not need a completely lactose free diet.

Dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, provide the body with calcium and Vitamin D, which are important for the growth and development of strong bones. If your child has lactose intolerance, you want to ensure he or she gets calcium and Vitamin D through other sources.

Lactose free milk is a great option for individuals with lactose intolerance who still would like to have the same vitamins and minerals found in regular milk.

Soy milk, almond milk, rice milk, and other alternative milk products are also options for individuals with lactose intolerance. Most of these products are fortified with both calcium and Vitamin D.

Note that almond milk and rice milk generally contain little to no protein, while regular milk contains 8 grams of protein per cup.

Aside from milk, other calcium sources include: Calcium fortified juice and breakfast cereals, canned fish with bones such as salmon, broccoli, kale, tofu, and soy.

Aside from milk, other Vitamin D sources include: Eggs, mushrooms, liver, and the body naturally makes Vitamin D when exposed to sunshine.

What About Gluten?

What is Gluten?

Gluten is the protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. Gluten is sometimes found in some oat products that are contaminated with wheat during processing.

What is Gluten Sensitivity?

Sensitivity to the protein gluten may cause symptoms in some individuals. Research is currently underway to better understand the cause of gluten sensitivity.

Celiac Disease

When individuals with celiac disease consume gluten it results in damage to the small intestine, which can result in important nutrients, such as iron, calcium, and fat, not being properly absorbed.

There are a wide range of symptoms associated with celiac disease, including constipation, diarrhea, abdominal pain, bone or joint pain, and anemia.

Individuals with celiac disease must follow a gluten-free diet to avoid damage to the intestines.

Does my child need to follow a gluten free diet?

Before starting your child on a gluten free diet you should discuss your concerns with your child's physician or a registered dietitian.

Providing your doctor with information about foods consumed and associated symptoms can be of help.

Conclusion

In this course you learned what a food allergy is, the most common food allergens, and the symptoms of an allergic reaction. You learned about epinephrine and how to respond in an emergency situation. You learned about food intolerances and how they differ from food allergies. You also learned tips for managing food allergies at home and school. We hope you will use the information in this course to help ensure the safety and well-being of all children with food allergies.