



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Saudi Food & Drug Authority



Food Allergy



It is an opposite reaction of the human body's immune system to a substance in food that is supposed to be harmless in the normal state. In the body's attempt to resist, the immune system produces antibodies to this substance that triggers the emergence of allergy symptoms within minutes, hours, and perhaps days. The tendency to develop allergies is often hereditary in the sense that parents may pass it down through genes to their children. A person may be allergic to one or more types of food at the same time. Milk, eggs, peanuts, fish, shellfish, soybeans, nuts, and wheat account for about 90% of food allergy problems.



FOOD ALLERGY



What are the symptoms and who are more likely to develop food allergy?

The most common symptoms are: itching or swelling of the lips, tongue, throat or skin, hoarseness, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain. Allergies may also be more common in infants and children than adults.



What is the difference between a food allergy and a food intolerance?

- Food intolerance often occurs in children when they are unable to digest or absorb certain parts of the food due to the loss or insufficiency of enzymes to convert food into easily absorbed parts for the body to benefit from. While food allergy occurs as a result of the immune system's resistance to parts of the food that it considers foreign in the body.
- People suffering from this condition must be aware of what food groups they are allergic to, because an allergy to one type may include the rest of the group, and this is particularly common with seafood.

How are food allergens identified?

Food allergens can be identified by running an allergy test supervised by a doctor and a clinical dietitian. The test consists of the following steps:

Step 1: To Determine the food allergen, keep the following details under check:

- Foods you eat and associated symptoms.
- The time lapse from consumption to symptom threshold.
- The quantity and quality of foods consumed.
- Foods that you suspect are the cause of allergy.
- The types of food that cause allergies and allergic diseases in the family.

Step 2:

- **A)** Stop eating suspicious foods for two weeks, and then record your observations during the cessation period. If the symptoms disappear, this means that the food you stopped consuming may be the main culprit.
- **B)** Eating suspicious foods (CAUTION:: DO NOT TAKE THIS STEP, if you have a history of a severe allergic reaction to this food). If you develop the same symptoms within ten minutes to two hours, this means that the food you had is the main culprit.

How is food allergy treated?

- The best choice of treatment is to avoid allergenic foods.
- Find out the ingredients included in your daily meals to ensure that they do not pose any risk of allergy.
- If the foods are canned, you should read the ingredients on the label. Bear in mind that some preservatives may cause allergies.
- Severe allergic reactions can be life-threatening as they can potentially affect many body parts. Thus, if a person is having a severe allergic reaction, you must immediately take him/her to the nearest hospital or clinic.



Link to source material



