

May is Food Allergy Action Month

Peanut free, soy free, gluten free... it can seem as if there are more kids with allergies than there were just a decade or two ago. Are we just more aware? Or has something changed that is impacting the health of our children? This month's MLC Minutes will explore food allergies and what you should know.

5% of all children under the age of five have food allergies. That is roughly 1 in 13 kids. Odds are good that you know a child with a food allergy. The good news is that food allergies are often outgrown during early childhood. It is estimated that 80% to 90% of egg, milk, wheat, and soy allergies go away by age 5 years. Some allergies are more persistent.

Why are food allergies on the rise?

Two major causes for allergies to be on the rise are that we have a more industrial or processed diet, the other is that we are too clean. Yes, too clean. We sanitize everything making it harder for our bodies to determine what is safe and not safe.

How do I know if my child has food allergies?

Signs of an allergy: Histamines are released which can cause a person to experience hives, asthma, itching in the mouth, trouble breathing, stomach pains, vomiting, and/or diarrhea.

What is a food allergy vs. a food intolerance?

When there is an abnormal response of the body to a certain food which affects the immune system, it is an **allergy**. It is important to know that this is different from a food **intolerance**, which does not affect the immune system, but may have similar symptoms.



May MLC Family Minutes

A resource from our family to yours.



Severe Symptoms

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction. It is life-threatening. If you suspect your child is having anaphylaxis, call 911 to get help right away. This can include:

- Trouble breathing, shortness of breath, or wheezing
- Feeling as if the throat is closing
- Hoarseness or trouble talking
- Swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and throat
- Cool, moist, or pale blue skin
- Feeling faint, lightheaded, or confused
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Fast and weak heartbeat
- Feeling dizzy, with a sudden drop in blood pressure
- Loss of consciousness
- Seizure

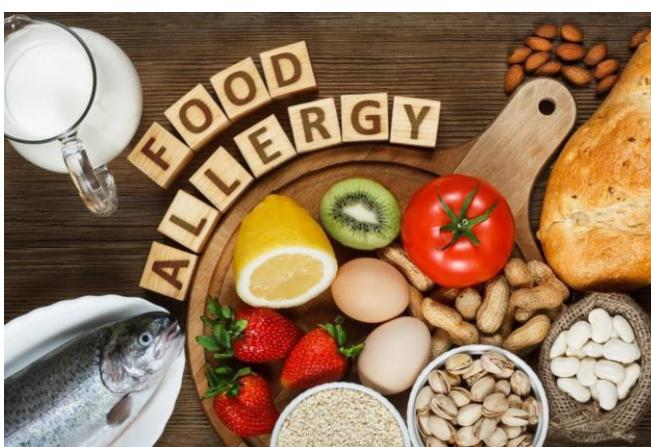
Allergy Myths

Myth buster #1 – *Airborne reactions are a huge concern.* Most food cannot cause an allergic reaction by being airborne. They need to be ingested. The exception is with cooking fish.

Myth buster #2 - *You can never eat out.* Children with allergies can enjoy dining out. Carry a “dining out card,” which displays the food the child is allergic to so that can be given to the chef.

Eight foods most often to cause allergies

- Milk
- Tree nut
- Egg
- Peanut
- Wheat
- Fish
- Soy
- Shellfish



Can food allergies be prevented?

There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction. For many years, it was recommended to delay giving a child certain highly allergenic foods until after age 1 year. But new research shows that for babies at high risk of developing peanut allergy, giving them peanuts between 4 to 6 months can greatly lower the risk for peanut allergy. If your child is at high risk for peanut allergy, talk with your child's healthcare provider before giving them peanuts.

References

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/food-allergies-in-children>

<https://www.cedars-sinai.org/health-library/diseases-and-conditions---pediatrics/f/food-allergies-in-children.html>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Food-Allergies-in-Children.aspx>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/food-allergies/index.htm>

<https://www.childrensmercy.org/parentish/2019/05/food-allergies/>