



Anaphylaxis is an extreme allergic reaction that is potentially fatal and is a medical emergency.

FOOD ALLERGIES

What Is A Food Allergy?

- A food allergy is the body’s adverse (negative) response to a particular food or ingredient – usually a protein. A true allergy is always accompanied by an immune response that may or may not involve an antibody. Adverse responses to foods that do not involve the immune system are called intolerances. For example, if you are lactose intolerant, your symptoms are due to a decrease in the production of an enzyme called lactase which is needed to break down the sugar in milk. While intolerances may result in undesirable physical symptoms, they are not true food allergies.



Food Allergy Symptoms

Symptoms may occur after eating, inhaling, or contacting a food to which you are allergic. Some symptoms may occur with cross contamination of the allergen with other non-allergen food ingredients. Symptoms may appear within minutes to several hours after exposure and can include:

- Hives (reddish, swollen, itchy areas on the skin)
- Eczema (a persistent dry, itchy rash)
- Redness of the skin or around the eyes
- Itchy mouth or ear canal
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Nasal congestion or a runny nose
- Sneezing or slight, dry cough
- Uterine contractions

Diagnosis And Testing Methods

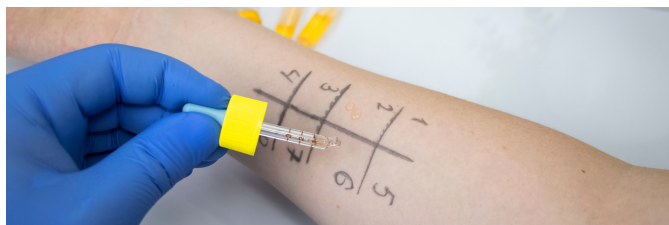
- It is very important to be correctly diagnosed to avoid unnecessary restriction of your diet. Consult with a board-certified allergist. An allergist is a specialist medical doctor who uses a variety of methods to identify a food allergy, including scientifically validated tests.
- Reputable bodies, such as the National Institute of Health, provide guidelines for the diagnosis and management of food allergies. However, some practitioners use tests that are not scientifically proven to be effective. Relying on these invalid, unreliable and often expensive tests may lead to false diagnoses. Below are proven valid tests.

Trial Elimination Diet



- Involves a trial period in which one eliminates specific foods from their diet. Generally combined with a blood test or skin prick test and is helpful to diagnose allergies and related disorders (like allergies that affect the gut).

Skin Prick Test



- A drop of solution containing the allergen is put onto the back or forearm and then pricks or scratches the skin to allow the solution to enter just below the surface. Results appear within 30 mins. Allergies are indicated by the presence of a wheal (raised white bump surrounded by itchy red skin).

Blood Test



- Also known as RASTs, measures the presence of IgE antibodies to specific foods. Best choice for individuals with a chronic skin condition or taking antihistamines that would compromise the skin prick test. Different tests and scoring methods are used but in general, the higher the level of antibodies the more likely there is an allergy to the food being tested.

Oral Food Challenge



- Highly accurate test that also has the potential to cause a serious reaction. This test should only be performed by an experienced allergist in a controlled environment. An allergist will feed patient suspect food in measured doses and observe for signs of food allergies. Severe symptoms are rarely seen and antihistamines or other medications can be given following reaction.