

Understanding Food Allergies

What is a food allergy?

The body mistaking a food as harmful. Once a person has a food allergy, an allergic reaction occurs every time they eat that food.

Common Food Allergens

Foods that most commonly cause food allergy are:

- milk and milk products
- egg
- peanut
- tree nuts – like almonds, cashews and walnuts
- soy
- seafood – like fish, shellfish and crustaceans such as crab and lobster
- wheat
- sesame



DID YOU KNOW

Food allergy and other allergic conditions – such as eczema, asthma and hay fever – tend to run in families. Talk about your family history with your health care provider to find out if your baby is at risk.

Introducing Common Food Allergens

To reduce the risk of a food allergy developing, introduce the common food allergens when your baby has shown that she's ready for solid foods – usually around 6 months.

After your child is eating a few other solid foods (see [Introducing Solid Foods](#)), start offering her the common food allergens one at a time. Begin with the common allergens your family eats most often. Try, for example:

- peanut and tree-nut butters blended into infant cereal or spread thinly on strips of toast
- well-cooked egg and seafood
- milk products like yogurt and grated cheese. Wait until 9 to 12 months to offer whole (3.25%) milk.



TRY THIS

See *Reducing Risk of Food Allergy in Your Baby* at healthlinkbc.ca to learn more.

Signs of Food Allergy

Allergic reactions usually appear within a few minutes of being exposed to a food, but can happen up to 2 hours later. The most common signs include:

- hives, swelling, redness or rash
- stuffy or runny nose with itchy, watery eyes
- vomiting
- coughing



MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Some allergic reactions – to food, insect stings, medications and other allergens – can be life threatening. Call 9-1-1 immediately if your child has any of the following:

- swelling of the mouth, tongue or throat
- hives that are spreading
- trouble breathing, swallowing or speaking, or a hoarse or rough voice
- repetitive coughing or wheezing
- pale or bluish face or lips
- faintness, weakness or has passed out