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## Introduction

Living with a food allergy is a burden. Having allergies toward certain types of food is not fun at all especially when everyone is feasting on the food you are allergic to in front of you. In fact, a severe allergic reaction can be deadly. Once you learn you are allergic to food, you have to be on your guard against eating anything that might have the ingredient.

In the US, food allergy affects approximately 5% of children under the age of 5 and 4% of people aged 5 and up. Food allergies in kids often appear as hives or a belly ache. Parents are confused by the condition and treat for other ailment.

Once the problem is identified as food allergies then the problem is finding foods to fill the gap. For example, children with a milk allergy can't drink cow's milk, but what are the options? If your child was already a picky eater, your challenge to get them to eat a decent diet just became even more challenging.

You'll spend a lot more time shopping for groceries because you have to read and evaluate ingredient labels. Dining out is challenging as well because you have to make sure that what you order does not contain any of the ingredients that will cause a severe allergic reaction. Suddenly, eating becomes a chore.

Throughout this book we'll at a few of the important facts about food allergies, symptoms, treatment and living a life without some of the foods we love.

## Background

I work in the hospitality industry as an assistant to a caterer. She is always on the alert for food allergies. She asks clients about their known food allergies and if they are aware if any of their guests suffer from food related allergies or even food intolerances. She always recommends having a gluten-free, nut-free dessert as an option for guests. Another option is offering a gelato or sherbet instead of milk-based ice cream.

Just this last Christmas while catering a holiday party we experienced an emergency situation caused by a food allergy. A young girl, 11 years old, had a terrific tummy ache after eating one of the peanut brownie desserts. I found out about the situation when the father came into the kitchen asking for a bucket or something he could give the child to use as a “vomit bucket” while they drove home. He had packed up the family to return home thinking the child had come down with the flu.

As I was searching for a pail to offer for the trip, my catering friend asked the little girl how she felt and what she had eaten. The girl responded that she felt like throwing up, was light headed and was finding it difficult to breath. My friend looked at the father and instructed him to take the girl to the local after-hours emergency clinic instead of making the 60-minute drive back home. She was certain the girl was presenting symptoms of a peanut allergy.

He did just that and eventually returned to the party to thank us for the guidance. The doctor at the clinic administered a shot of epinephrine which counteracted the allergic reaction caused by the peanut butter brownie desert. The little girl’s belly ache was gone, she was breathing without effort and the stress and fear in her demeanor was replaced by smiles and – hunger.

This incident shows how food allergies often are misunderstood. Parents may go for years treating a symptom and not the real cause. This book will teach you what you need to know about food allergies and what you can do to deal with this problem.

## Understanding Food Allergies

The most common foods triggering an allergic reaction in children include peanuts, milk, eggs, wheat, and shellfish, soy and tree nuts. For adults, they include fish, peanuts, shellfish and tree nuts.

Some people tend to confuse food allergies with food intolerance. These two are not the same as food intolerance is not as life threatening as a food allergy. A food allergy is when your body's immune system treats a specific type of food as a substance it must reject. Your body's reaction is to break out in hives and you may experience symptoms such as swollen mouth and throat, coughing, wheezing and eczema. Food intolerance usually causes minor nuisances such as bloating, stomach cramps and diarrhea. Why our bodies react the way they do to certain foods is not completely understood.

When someone ingests food that they are allergic to, the symptoms will usually manifest within 30 minutes to 2 hours. The severity of your symptoms will depend on the amount of food you ate and your body's reaction to the allergen. The most common symptoms are hives, wheezing and hoarse voice. Severe reactions may include low blood pressure, blocked airways and difficulty in breathing.

A food allergy can begin at any age, but it frequently begins during childhood. Some food allergies can be outgrown and others stick around for a lifetime. An allergist can evaluate your condition by asking certain questions. They will also run some blood tests and you will be asked to keep a food journal so you can start an elimination diet. A skin prick test may also be conducted to determine which specific foods cause an allergic reaction.

The best way to deal with food allergies is to completely avoid the food you are allergic to. This means that you have to familiarize yourself with hidden food items found in different products. Every time you dine out, make sure you tell the waiter in advance about your allergies. If your child is allergic to certain foods then it's a must to inform their care provider or teacher. This will enable them to administer first aid in case of an allergic reaction. Lastly, you need to make sure that your child always carries their medication with them.

Bad reactions to food are more commonly caused by food intolerance rather than a food allergy. Food intolerance often has similar symptoms as a food allergy which is why many people always confuse the two. Food allergies cause an immune system reaction that can affect some organs in the body while food intolerance is generally less serious and the symptoms are usually limited to digestive problems such as bloating and diarrhea.

Food allergies are not as common as you think. Less than 5% of the adult population has food allergies and 10% of that population are children. Many children will eventually outgrow some food allergies such as dairy products, soy and wheat. However, this is not the case for everyone. Fruits, vegetables and other food products account for approximately 10% of other food allergies.

When your body reacts to certain foods, your immune system would see them as a type of germ or as something harmful and act accordingly. Histamine and certain antibodies are then released into your bloodstream along with other substances to fight the food allergen. These substances can cause different signs of reactions such as hives, runny nose, itchy or swollen eyes, dry throat, diarrhea, esophageal swelling and anaphylactic shock.

Your genes play a big role in your risk of food allergies. If your parents have allergies caused by something other than food such as hay fever or animal dander your gene pool is susceptible to allergies caused by any source. This means you and your children have a great propensity to food allergies or otherwise. If you *or* your spouse has allergies, your children have a fifty-fifty chance of developing food allergies. If both parents have allergies, the risk factor for food allergies in children jumps to over 60%.

You will notice that children, infants and toddlers have food allergies more so than adults. This is due to the fact that their immune system is not fully developed yet. Additionally, their digestive system may not be able to digest certain proteins and other chemicals in food that may trigger an allergic reaction. Some children eventually grow out many of the food allergies and only the most severe food allergens (nuts, shellfish, etc.) become their lifelong problem.

If you suspect that you are allergic to certain types of food, you must immediately consult with your health care provider so he can accurately assess your condition. You will undergo a series of tests to identify the culprit behind your allergic reactions. In addition to the allergy tests, you would have to make some modifications to your diet. Once the food allergen is identified, you will be advised to avoid it completely. Your doctor will also ask you to take some medications as needed.

## Facts and Myths About Food Allergies

There are a number of misconceptions about food allergies and unfortunately symptoms often worsen because people have bad information on this problem. Instead of validating an allergy through proven medical procedures, people tend to do their own analysis. This means they make incorrect and unnecessary changes to their diet and lifestyle without realizing that these changes can be detrimental to their health. And then the problem persists. The following facts and myths about food allergies below so you'll have a deeper understanding on the said condition.

At least 20% of the people in the United States assume they have food allergies when they actually don't. Often a food allergy is actually food intolerance. Only about 3-5% of this country's population truly has food allergies. Knowing the difference between food intolerance and food allergy is important. Generally, allergic reactions to food can be life threatening if not treated quickly. If you suspect a food allergy, an allergist can identify which condition you have.

Most children with food allergies do outgrow them eventually. Some people do adapt to milk, soy and eggs as they mature. However, allergies to shellfish and tree nuts last a lifetime.

Food labeling laws require all ingredients to be listed. While the new laws regarding food labeling do address the majority of ingredients that cause allergies, there is that small percentage that is still not covered. Only recently has it been required that products manufactured in a plant that also process peanuts or nuts must be clearly identified on the food label.

All food allergies start in childhood. This is false. While it is true that the majority of food allergies manifest during childhood, many adults tend to develop food allergies later in life. Hormonal changes in the body or external environmental factors can trigger the onset of adult food allergies.

Breaking out in hives means you have a food allergy. This is absolutely false. There are a number of things that can cause hives such as drug interactions, bacterial or viral infections, bug bites and even exposure to extreme heat or cold.

A peanut and tree nut allergy is the same thing. False. A peanut is not even a tree nut, but a legume. Soy beans, kidney beans and even garden peas are genetically closer to a peanut than a tree nut. People can be allergic to peanuts, but can eat a walnut without any problems and vice versa. Often this causes people to believe that they don't have a food allergy to peanuts or nuts. They continue consuming one or the other and continue to have allergic reactions.

Arming yourself with the right information will allow you to deal with your food allergies more effectively. Do not believe everything that other people say because this can pose a threat to

your health. When in doubt, ask your doctor so he can guide you on how to improve your condition.

## Food Intolerance vs Food Allergies

Food intolerance and food allergies are often confused with each other because most of the symptoms are similar. Sometimes a person becomes ill from eating a certain food because their body cannot properly process the food, or because they are allergic to the food. In order to manage your condition properly, you need to know what's causing the adverse reaction in the first place- whether it's food intolerance or food allergies. These two are different in terms of their symptoms, treatment and origin.

Eating foods to which you are intolerant can make you feel miserable and the symptoms usually last for hours. However, if you have a food allergy, the symptoms could be life-threatening. Genuine food allergy is rare. In fact, globally only 2% of the adult population and about 8% of children under the age of three are suffering from a true allergy.

Food intolerance on the other hand is more common. The symptoms come on more slowly, usually many hours (up to 48 hours) after eating the trigger food. The most common symptoms include bloating and stomach cramps. These responses take place in the digestive system. They occur because the body is unable to digest or break down the food properly. This could be attributed to enzyme deficiencies or sensitivity to food additives.

The most common type of food intolerance is lactose intolerance. Lactose intolerance means you cannot digest lactose, the sugar found in dairy products. People with food intolerance can often eat small amounts without the consequences, although others can be sensitive even to small amounts. Food intolerance is difficult to diagnose because of its association with other digestive diseases such as irritable bowel syndrome and inflammatory bowel disease. Also, there are not many reliable tests for this condition.

A food allergy is more serious as it involves immunologic reaction. The immune system controls how the body defends itself. For instance, if you are allergic to milk, your immune system thinks dairy is a bad substance and fights it by producing chemicals called histamines. Unlike food intolerance, food allergies can cause serious or life-threatening reaction just by eating a tiny amount or inhaling the allergen. A severe reaction is called anaphylaxis. This requires an immediate injection of the hormone called epinephrine.

Both food intolerance and food allergy share symptoms like diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and nausea. You can tell if it is food intolerance if you are experiencing symptoms such as bloating, gas, heartburn, irritability and headaches. For food allergies, symptoms include itchy skin, rash, hives, chest pain, sudden drop in blood pressure, weak pulse, trouble swallowing or breathing and swelling of the tongue and throat.

In either case, self-diagnosis is not the best solution. Only a trained allergy specialist has the tools, tests and recommendations to treat your food allergy.

## Common Food Allergy Symptoms

Some people go on for years without knowing that they are allergic to certain foods.

In adults, the most common trigger food causing allergic reactions include peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish. For children, peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, soy and wheat are the most common culprits. The allergic reactions are mainly caused by the body's immune response to a food protein. This occurs when the immune system mistakenly identifies a protein as a harmful element or an invader.

There are treatments to help people tolerate airborne allergies. However, there is no known cure for food allergies yet. There are medications (over-the-counter or prescribed anti histamines) that can be taken to relieve symptoms. Avoiding the food substance is the best cure for a food allergy.

The severity of the symptoms varies from one person to another. Some people have a mild allergic reaction toward certain foods while others may experience very serious symptoms. These symptoms can manifest within minutes of eating a food. In some cases, the patient experiences an allergic reaction within a couple of days.

The symptoms can affect the digestive system, skin and respiratory system. For the digestive system, a person who is having an allergic reaction may experience itching in the mouth and throat (as soon as contact with the allergen takes place), stomach cramps, vomiting, nausea and diarrhea. Although very rare, rectal bleeding may also occur.

Symptoms that appear on the skin include hives, redness, swelling and atopic dermatitis (intense itching and red, raised rash). These reactions are very common among children. For the respiratory system, the most common signs of an allergic reaction are wheezing, itchy, stuffy, runny nose, sneezing, coughing and difficulty in breathing.

The symptoms that are mentioned above can be relieved by taking antihistamines. The most severe reaction for food allergies is called anaphylaxis. This can be fatal because it can affect many body systems.

Peanuts and the venom from a bee sting are said to be the most dangerous triggers for this deadly reaction. The chemicals that are released during an attack can cause the body to go into shock. The blood pressure suddenly drops and the airways will narrow.

The most common initial symptoms of a peanut allergy are:

- itchy eyes,
- nausea
- hives
- itchy skin or which may look like a rash
- a tingling feeling on the lips or tongue

Left untreated the victim's symptoms can quickly become life threatening. A severe allergic reaction quickly progresses into an anaphylactic seizure which is a medical emergency. These progressed symptoms include:

- pale skin,
- tightness in the throat,
- difficult breathing,
- feeling of a lump in the throat,
- wheezing or coughing.
- swollen tongue,
- feeling of a blocked passageway
- choking
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- dizziness
- weak pulse

The victim requires immediate medical attention and an injection of epinephrine. Failure to reduce the symptoms can result to unconsciousness or even death. If you or someone you love is experiencing mild symptoms, make an appointment with your allergist or immunologist. The next attack may be far more serious.

## What Triggers Food Allergies?

An allergic reaction to food is your immune system's response to certain proteins found in food. Over half of all allergic reactions are caused by milk, eggs, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, fish, shellfish and soy. In the United States, these ingredients should be labeled on all packaged foods manufactured in the US. However, these rules start to blur when products are imported from other countries.

When a person reacts to certain foods, the symptoms usually manifest within minutes to a few hours. The severity of the symptoms is different for each individual. Sometimes they are mistaken as symptoms of food intolerance and vice versa.

If you are allergic to certain foods, even a tiny amount of the trigger food can cause a severe reaction. However, not all adverse reactions such as nausea, stomach cramps and hives are linked to food allergies.

If you get a belly ache after drinking milk, this may be related to a deficiency in the enzyme that breaks down sugar in milk. When individuals with lactose intolerance drink cow's milk or eat other dairy products, they may experience digestive upset. This is often misinterpreted as a food allergy.

Almost any food can trigger an allergic reaction. Some individuals are only allergic to one food while others may be allergic to several types of food. Cow's milk is the leading cause of allergic reactions in very young children. Milk allergy affects about 2 percent to 3 percent of infants worldwide, and its signs and symptoms can be serious enough to cause distress for both the allergic child and their family.

Believe it or not, some food allergies are triggered by exercise. Since the body organs and functions are stimulated by exercise, a person with an exercise-induced food allergy may feel itchy and lightheaded. Hives and anaphylaxis may occur in severe cases.

If you are dealing with this type of condition, it helps to avoid eating before working out. Some fresh fruits and vegetables may also trigger a mild allergic reaction that causes the mouth to tingle or itch. This is called cross-reactivity. The proteins in fruits and vegetables cause the reaction because they are similar to allergy-causing proteins found in certain pollens.

Allergic reactions are different for each person. Some are mild while some can pose serious dangers to one's life. A serious allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis. It happens quickly after the exposure and it involves the whole body. The tissues in the body release histamine and other substances. This will then cause the airways to tighten and result to other symptoms such as drop in blood pressure and loss of consciousness. In extremely severe cases or if proper treatment is not administered right away, the person may die.

## Emergency Treatment for Anaphylaxis

Food allergy is not something that should be taken lightly because some symptoms can be fatal. If you are allergic to a certain food protein, your immune system responds to this allergen by releasing chemicals that cause allergy symptoms. Normally, these symptoms occur in one location of the body.

Mild allergic reactions to certain foods may include tingling sensation in the mouth, itching, hives, eczema, swelling of the tongue, lips and face, nasal congestion and wheezing. Sometimes, symptoms can be as severe as difficulty in breathing, fainting and anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction and it requires immediate medical attention. If proper treatment is not administered right away, there is a chance that the patient will die. This reaction can happen within seconds, minutes or hours of exposure to something you are allergic to. The most common causes are foods, medications and insect bites or stings.

Basically, the body goes into a panic mode and it releases a flood of chemicals that can cause a person to go into shock. The patient's blood pressure may also drop and the throat may swell, causing difficulty in breathing. Aside from breathing issues, the symptoms of anaphylaxis include severe itching of the eyes or face, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea and angioedema.

Currently, there is only one effective treatment for anaphylaxis and that is epinephrine by injection. Epinephrine, also called adrenaline, is a hormone and a neurotransmitter that can regulate heart rate, metabolism and blood vessel and air passage diameters. The most important role of this hormone with regard to anaphylaxis is its ability to rapidly reverse anaphylactic symptoms.

It is normally given through an automatic injection device called EpiPen. Health care practitioners commonly inject this hormone to the thigh area. If the patient is not responding to the treatment, the injection may be repeated every 5 to 15 minutes. Statistics show that 16 to 35% of patients require a second dose. This hormone has minor side effects including anxiety, tremors, headaches and palpitations.

Aside from epinephrine, anaphylaxis is treated with intravenous fluids and medicines that will help support the actions of the heart and circulatory system. Once the patient is stabilized, antihistamines and steroids may be given to completely reduce symptoms.

If you are allergic to the things that cause anaphylaxis, it's very important for you to be cautious all the time. You can ask your doctor for an epinephrine injection kit prescription so you can carry it with you wherever you go. It's also highly recommended for a person with food allergies to wear a medical bracelet or pendant that identifies the allergy. In case of an emergency, this could save a person's life.

## Testing for Food Allergies

Just because you've had a bad reaction to food or food ingredient doesn't mean that you are automatically allergic. In most cases, the condition is caused by food intolerance rather than a food allergy. It's understandable why people think these two are one and the same because they have almost identical symptoms.

However, understanding the differences between the two helps you develop the best treatment strategy. A food allergy is caused by the abnormal response of the body to food protein that is triggered by the immune system while food intolerance is the term used for non-allergic food hypersensitivity.

The first step to managing food allergies is to get tested so that you'll know which foods to avoid. The doctor will ask about your symptoms and which foods seem to cause problems. Your diagnosis will be easier if you have a diary of your eating habits, symptoms and medications.

You need to tell him if your family has a history of food allergies or other allergies as well. A physical examination is also required to rule out other medical problems. Allergy tests are usually performed by an allergist, doctor or a trained nurse practitioner. Depending on your results, you may be advised to undergo more advanced testing

A combination of skin testing and blood testing is usually used to test for a food allergy. The scratch test is the most common skin test where the doctor or nurse scratches the skin with a small amount of liquid extract of an allergen (food or pollen). The allergist will then observe the skin for 15 minutes and see if reddish, raised spots form. Obviously, this is an indication of an allergy.

If you are allergic to several things or if it's not clear what triggers your allergic reactions, several different allergens will be rubbed on your skin all at the same time. For the blood test, a blood sample is taken and it will be sent to a medical laboratory for analysis. This test is done to measure the patient's immune system's response to certain foods by identifying the amount of allergy-type antibodies in the bloodstream.

If the results are still unclear from both skin and blood testing, an allergist might suggest a food challenge. You will be given increasing amounts of the potential food allergen to eat while they watch for allergic reactions.

Identifying which certain foods trigger an allergic reaction proves to be a challenge for most doctors. Your health care provider would have to make an assessment based from your history. It would help a lot if you write in your food diary daily. List down everything you eat and make sure you include whatever reactions you have to certain foods. This is crucial in determining your trigger foods.

Your doctor will also advise you to go on an elimination diet. He will then confirm the initial prognosis by performing a series of skin tests, blood tests or food challenges. The tests are required to confirm or rule out allergies and for you to deal with your condition accordingly. Before you go through allergy testing, your doctor will ask you about your eating habits, illnesses, where you live and work and lifestyle. Your doctor will also tell you which medicines to avoid before the test.

## Food Substitutes for Food Allergies

Living with food allergies is not easy but there is no reason why you should let it take over your life. One of the most common food allergens is milk. If you are allergic to milk, you need to avoid milk, all dairy products and anything that has cow milk's proteins in it such as yogurt, butter, cheese, cream, custard, ice cream, pudding, au gratin dishes, white sauces, donuts, malted milk and salad dressings.

Dairy products are rich in calcium, protein and vitamins B12 and D so they are required for proper nutrition. If you have a milk allergy, you can drink soy, rice or almond milk instead. These substitutes are loaded with calcium and vitamin D as well. Non-dairy ice cream, chocolate, cheese and yogurt are also available. To fill the void, you can load up on foods like spinach, broccoli and soy products. You can consult a dietitian to make sure you are eating a balanced diet and you are getting enough vitamins from the food you eat.

Other very common food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts and nut-based products. If you have a severe allergy to nuts, you need to ask your doctor before trying any substitute. If you like peanut butter, you will also enjoy sunflower seed butter or soy nut butter. Make sure the label says something like "peanut free", "tree nut free" and "processed in a peanut and tree nut free facility". Sunflower seed spread has a nutty taste and although it's more expensive than peanut butter, it's definitely worth the money so you can enjoy a "nutty" flavored spread.

Another great vegetable substitute for peanut and other nut butters is hummus. It is made of chickpeas and is a rich source of protein. Unfortunately, if you are allergic to peanuts, you may also be allergic to chick peas. If you are allergic to chickpeas, obviously, you need to stay away from hummus. Sunflower seeds or dried soybeans are good alternatives for peanuts if you want something crunchy to snack on.

For a gluten allergy, stick to foods that are free of gluten such as corn, buckwheat, nut flours like almond meal, tapioca, potato, quinoa, soy, soy milk, yogurt, flax milk, apple cider, hot cocoa and chocolate mixes, tea and tea drinks, coconut and cornmeal. Make it a habit to check the label to make sure that the product is gluten-free. If you are allergic to eggs but you love to bake, you can use substitutes such as egg replacement, banana and applesauce.

For an egg substitute in baked goods, you can also use a mixture of water, vinegar and baking powder or water, baking powder and oil. For wheat allergies, you can use ingredients such as rice flour, potato starch, soy flour, tapioca flour or corn flour in place of wheat flour. If the recipe calls for noodles, use wheat-free pasta. In recipes that use breadcrumbs, you can use crumbled wheat-free crackers, cornmeal or shredded parmesan cheese.

## Traveling With Your Food Allergy Medications

Your condition should never stop you from exploring the world. Although planning a trip for someone with food allergies proves to be scary and stressful, with a little know-how there's no reason why you can't enjoy your vacation. Traveling by air used to be easier but since the 9/11 attack, security is tighter and there are some items that we are no longer allowed to carry. But the good news is that people are still permitted to bring their medications on board.

Certain medications such as EpiPen (epinephrine autoinjector) can be carried through security at the airport but there are some things you need to be aware of. When traveling with prescribed medications, you need to make sure that they include a legible label from the pharmacy. If you have to carry syringes or anything injectible, you need to bring the prescription from your doctor. Otherwise, you will not be allowed to carry it on board.

If your medication comes in a box and only the box and not the medication itself is labeled, you need to store your medication inside the box so that you can take the labeled box with you as proof. A letter from your doctor on his official letterhead that states your medical condition, vital statistics and list of medications is necessary as well.

Traveling with medication in a liquid form is a bit trickier. New travel rules state that any liquids placed in a carry-on bag must be in containers no more than three fluid ounces and all of the containers need to fit in a clear quart size plastic bag. If your medication is in a bottle larger than three fluid ounces, it is still possible to have it pass through security. However, you have to declare the medications at checkpoint and present the proper paperwork as mentioned above.

If you do not want your medication to go through the x-ray machine at checkpoint, you would have to request a visual inspection of the prescription drug. Of course, not all inspectors can visually authenticate medications and therefore, it may be necessary to x-ray the contents. If the medication cannot be x-rayed, a special note from the doctor is required.

If your medication comes in a special bag, this will not be counted towards your carry-on baggage allowance. Medicines are considered as a necessity so they are exempted from the airline rules that state the number of bags you can take on board. As a reminder, always check with your airline about their rules regarding prescription medications and other medical supplies.

## Tips on How to Manage Food Allergies

Obviously, the best way to manage food allergies is to avoid the food that causes the allergies. However, it is oftentimes difficult to tell which specific food is causing your symptoms. To help you identify the trigger food, you may want to record everything you eat in a food diary. If you feel any kind of an allergic symptom after eating a particular food, write that down too. Symptoms of food allergies usually manifest thirty minutes after ingesting the food that you are allergic to.

Once you are able to identify the food allergen, you need to stay away from it completely as a whole and when it is mixed with other ingredients. For example, if you are allergic to milk, it's not enough to avoid milk itself, yogurt, cheese and ice cream. You have to check the label of your salad dressing as well to make sure that milk proteins is not listed on the ingredients.

Some candy bars and cereals may not contain allergens but if they are produced in the same facility that handles products which do have food allergens, there is a chance of cross contamination. When you are allergic to certain foods, make it a habit to always read the labels. Be mindful not only of the main ingredients but the inactive ingredients as well. If you are allergic to nuts, look for labels like "may contain nuts" or "produced in a facility that also processes nuts".

When dining out, you have to take precautionary measures to ensure that you won't ingest anything that will cause severe allergic reactions. You may want to tell the waiter or restaurant manager about your food allergies so they can prevent cross contamination when preparing your dish.

Also, you should always be prepared for possible reactions when you are in public. Wear a medical bracelet stating your medical condition so you will receive proper treatment. Always carry an EpiPen (a pen that contains epinephrine) with you just in case you go on an anaphylactic shock. Always keep an emergency food allergy kit at home, school or in the office so others can help you right away.

Informing your family, co-workers or fellow students about your condition is absolutely necessary. Answer whatever questions they may have and stay positive. You should also let them know about simple precautions that they can take when eating any food that you are allergic to around you. This can be a little intimidating for your friends or co-workers and you may create fear but as long as you explain everything to them, it shouldn't be that difficult.

## Resources

[Allergic Living magazine](#)

[American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology \(AAAAI\)](#)

[American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology \(ACAAI\)](#)

[American Dietetic Association \(ADA\)](#)

[American Medical Association \(AMA\)](#)

[American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#)

[American Psychiatric Association \(APA\)](#)

[Anaphylaxis Canada](#)

[Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America \(AAFA\)](#)

[Celiac Disease Center at Columbia University](#)

[Celiac Disease Foundation \(CDF\)](#)

[Celiac Sprue Association \(CSA\)](#)

[Codex Committee on Food Labeling \(CCFL\)](#)

[Consortium of Food Allergy Research \(CoFAR\)](#)

[Culinary Institute of America \(CIA\)](#)

[Duke University Medical Center \(CoFAR member\)](#)

[Epi-Pen](#)

[Food Allergy Research & Education \(FARE\)](#)

[Gluten Intolerance Group® of North America \(GIG\)](#)

[Johns Hopkins University \(CoFAR member\)](#)

[Kids with Food Allergies \(KFA\)](#)

[National Foundation for Celiac Awareness \(NFCA\)](#)

[United States Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#)