



Food Allergies what you need to know

What is the **Immune System**?

The primary roles of the immune system is to defend our body against the threats of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and cancer. The immune system accomplishes this by first being able to recognize the structural differences between these external threats and our normal body tissue. Then when our body comes into contact with these threats, the immune system triggers a series of defenses, sometimes referred to an inflammation.

What is **Allergy**?

Allergy is an abnormal condition of the immune system where it reacts to harmless substances such as pollen, dust, molds, and some food as if they were bacteria, viruses, and cancer. This leads to an overreaction of the immune system to these substances, which trigger a sequence of events referred to as allergic inflammation. Allergic inflammation is responsible for the annoying symptoms of allergy.

What is a **Food Allergy**?

Allergies can also develop from the overreaction of your immune system to foods. This will lead to the unwanted symptoms associated with allergic inflammation. However, not all adverse reactions after eating are due to allergy. They can be from simple over eating. Also, food that has spoiled can easily be contaminated with bacteria that can result in food poisoning; foods that contain chemicals such as caffeine, tyramine (red wine), and histamine (strawberries) can also cause non0allergic reactions. An allergic reaction to a food, on the other hand, involves the immune system, and occurs when the immune system distinguishes the food's surface architecture as being different from normal body tissues. It then triggers a sequence of allergy inflammation events leading to unwanted symptoms.

Different types of **Food Allergies** and **Food Allergy Symptoms**.

Immediate-Type Food Allergies

Immediate-type food reactions, sometimes called fixed food reactions, are not very common. Even so, they attract the most attention because they cause rapid and sometime very dramatic reactions. Breaking our in hives and itching or serious swelling of the tongue and throat soon after eating shellfish, peanuts, or garlic, are typical examples of immediate food reactions. The best treatment for this type of food allergy is complete elimination of the offending food from the diet.

Delayed-Type Food Allergies

Delayed-type food reactions, sometimes called cyclic or hidden food allergies, are the most common food allergy. However, unlike immediate food reactions, the connection between the causative food and the symptoms is more difficult to pinpoint- thus the term "hidden" food allergies. This is because the typical symptoms from a delayed foo allergy are slow to develop because repeated exposures to the food over a long time are required. Also, the symptoms are not so dramatic; they are usually slow to develop, chronic, an lingering. Headaches, runny nose, ea pressure, cough, and eczema are some examples of these symptoms. Delayed food allergies often contribute to symptom production in persons with long standing ear, nose, and throat complaints, such as ear or sinus infections, chronic voice or throat problems, eczema, hives, migraines, and asthma. These symptoms may also occur n people who do not have allergies, thus making is important to obtain a precise diagnosis. To further complicate things, the types of food that cause delayed allergies are commonly included in just about everyone's diet- milk, wheat, corn, egg, soy to name a few. On order to develop symptoms from delayed or



cyclic allergies, the allergic food must be in your diet on a fairly regular and repeating schedule. The actual pattern of exposure to the food will critically affect the presence, absence, and severity of symptoms- thus the term "cyclic" food allergy. And if enough food is kept in the system all the time, symptoms can actually be temporarily minimized or "masked." Therefore, some people will exhibit a dependence on the allergic food in order to keep symptoms in check, referred to as "craving" or "food addiction."

Could You Have **Food Allergy**?

It is estimated that over one third of the population has food allergy and /or food intolerance or food sensitivity. Considering the number of foods, chemicals, colorants, and preservatives that are poured into our bodies each day, it would come as a surprise that food can cause so much trouble. The less common, immediate food allergy is usually due to a food that is uncommon to the diet. The more common delayed or cyclic food allergy involved foods that are common to the diet and are eaten frequently.

Food allergy of the immediate type provokes a reaction that is swift in onset, and quickly noticeable to you and others. It is an anaphylactic reaction, similar to a reaction to penicillin or dyes used in some X-ray procedures. The reaction may range from hive or tightness in the chest to a total collapse and death due to obstruction of the respiratory system. Reaction may occur from very small exposures. Once recognized, these food should not be eaten by these sensitized persons.

Delayed or cyclic food allergy involves food that are regularly in the diet of most Americans, such as wheat, milk and dairy products, egg, corn, yeast, and soy. The exposure to these substances can be frequent and repetitious, especially when their identity is camouflaged or hidden inside the recipes of many

prepared and processed foods. Delayed food allergies should be suspected if you experienced childhood colic, skin rashes, ear infections, or asthma, have symptoms year round, have symptoms that worsen after meals. Other tip-offs are symptoms that are relieved with certain food or there is a craving for certain foods. If you are a "picky" eater, who chooses to eat repetitiously from a select and small group of food then you may be a set up for food allergies. Remember the delayed food allergies cause symptoms of chronic inflammation such as headaches, runny nose, ear and face pressure, cough, nasal, or sinus congestion and drainage, and eczema. Also, unrecognized food allergies may be why tests for inhalant allergies such as pollens, dusts, and molds are negative, or why there is a persistence of allergy symptoms despite treatment of inhalant allergies.

How do you find out if you have Food Allergy?

The first step in finding food allergy is to accept the idea that food allergy could be causing your symptoms. Allergic reactions to food can either be obvious and dangerous, or subtle and chronic, can affect almost all organ systems, and can produce almost any symptoms.

If you have already experienced a reaction that was immediate and obvious, then assume that another exposure could be dangerous. This is an immediate food allergy that needs no further confirmation. The best approach to this problem is simply to avoid the food. However, if you are not sure, even though you have suspicion, and you want to know for sure, then you can have a blood test that may be able to safely confirm your suspicion.

But what about the more common and harder-to recognize delayed food allergies?

The process and symptoms of delayed food allergies



are slow in developing and slow to be modified, so patience is important. If you have some symptoms that you think could be from delayed food allergies, then examine food that are eaten more frequently than twice per week. With assistance from your doctor, it may be helpful for you to formally record a two-week "diet diary." There are also blood tests that can identify certain food antibodies that have been built by your immune system in response to eating these foods. This information should give you and your doctor a list of possible foods causing delayed symptoms.

Once this list is prepared, more testing can help to confirm a delayed food allergy. There is a range of testing techniques available; however, there is also wide variation of opinion about which tests are best.

Perhaps the easiest delayed food allergy test you can do yourself is to monitor your symptoms for improvement after an appropriate period (two weeks) of elimination of the suspect food from the diet. This can be further confirmed by re-introducing the suspect food in pretest amounts, which should eventually result in a return of pretest symptoms. However, if you have several food allergies, a withdrawal test for one food may not give enough relief for you to be certain that that food is causing the trouble. Other effective methods of testing involve administering of the food directly to you by using skin tests or tests where you actually eat the food in the doctor's office. These tests are usually needed for diagnosis of more complex food allergy problems.

How do you treat **Food Allergies**?

Diet changes are the major treatment for all kinds of food allergies. Drug therapy may be helpful in reducing symptom intensity, but it cannot completely eliminate food allergy symptoms.

If you have an immediate food allergy, the best treatment is to completely stay away from that food. Avoidance must continue for life. Drug therapy cannot eliminate the risk of anaphylaxis from immediate food allergies.

If you have the delayed type of food allergy, the best treatment is to temporarily avoid eating those foods for several months. After that, the food may often be re-introduced into the diet on a non-repetitive, infrequent, and intermittent basis, without producing significant symptoms. Your otolaryngic allergist is trained to advise you on the detailed aspects of the necessary dietary changes. Another alternative therapy for delayed type food allergies, used by some otolaryngic allergists, involves food immunotherapy by administering food extracts either by injection or orally. Food immunotherapy is especially useful when treating multiple delayed food allergies, and, for best results, is often combined with dietary changes.

Is it important to identify and treat **Food Allergies**?

Successful avoidance of immediate food allergies can prevent uncomfortable or fatal attacks. Successful identification and treatment of delayed food allergies can greatly improve the quality of an allergic person's life.

The **American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy**

The **American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy (AAOA)** is a group of specialty physicians dedicated to the quality care of patients with allergies of the ears, nose, and throat. They are board certified specialists in Otolaryngology (ear, Nose, and Throat).

Members of the AAOA may attain the designation of Fellow (FAAOA) by meeting certain requirements, including passing a detailed examination covering the practice of Otolaryngic Allergy.