

# Food Allergy

## Practical Review and Solution

Food allergy is an immune reaction to food. It affects an estimated 6 to 8 percent of children and approximately 4 percent of adults. There has been a significant increase in the prevalence of allergic disorders in the past two decades. This could be related to a complex gene-environment interaction.

It is easy to confuse food allergy with food intolerance; both are hypersensitivities to food and can cause similar symptoms. Food intolerance, however, is less serious, and is not an immune response. It is usually related to lactose intolerance, monosodium glutamate (a food-flavor enhancer), contamination with microbes or toxins, or the pharmacologic activity of food.

We are gaining an understanding of the pathophysiology of food allergic disorder. There is well-recognized acute allergic reaction and anaphylaxis triggered by IgE antibody-mediated response to food protein, and increasing recognition of cell-mediated disorder, such as eosinophilic gastroenteropathies and food-induced enterocolitis.

Food antigens may provoke respiratory, skin, or gastrointestinal symptoms. Behavior manifestations (ADD, ADHD, autistic behavior, etc.) have been described, but are controversial. Gastrointestinal manifestations include nausea, vomiting, gastroesophageal reflux, abdominal pain, diarrhea, constipation, and GI bleeding.

Another, relatively new, disease entity related to food allergies is eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE). Recent experimental studies have established a link between allergens and EoE. Eosinophils are thought to migrate to the esophagus in response to foods or environmental substances that trigger an allergic response. While the exact pathogenesis is unknown, multiple studies are underway to better understand the disease and the most effective therapy.

In children, approximately 90 percent of all allergic reactions to food are caused by 8 primary foods, including milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, soy, wheat, and shellfish.

### Diagnosis

Diagnostic workup begins with a detailed history and physical examination. Food allergy is suspected when the above-mentioned symptoms occur with introduction to specific foods. Food intolerance of non-allergic mechanisms should be ruled out first. Skin prick test or radioallergosorbent test (RAST) can be useful in determining an IgE allergic reaction in the case of food allergy. These tests are most useful when the index of suspicion is high based on a detailed history.

### Treatment

The only proven effective treatment for a food allergy is an elimination diet often supplemented with an elemental formula.

At least 30 percent of infants with cow's milk allergy also have allergy to soy protein. Generally, these infants improve with protein hydrolysate formula. Eighty-five percent of infants with non-IgE-mediated food allergy recover by three years of age.

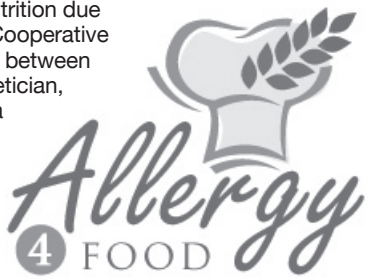
Allergy and intolerance to a variety of foods are common problems and can present with a wide range of clinical manifestations, including putting a person at risk for malnutrition due to dietary restrictions from food allergies. Cooperative management of the patient's food allergies between his/her primary care physician, allergist, dietician, and GI physician can help the patient live a healthy and happy life.

### Allergy 4 Food

At GI for Kids, PLLC, we see firsthand how food allergies can cause severe problems and disrupt a person's quality of life. We have developed Allergy 4 Food, a way for families to obtain specialized nutritional products that are not covered by government agencies or insurance.

Allergy 4 Food is a resource that allows you to shop for nutritional supplements without the frustration of driving all over town. Our company was developed to assist those persons having difficulty obtaining nutritional supplements from outside resources. Many of these specialized formulas are not sold on store shelves, and it can be time-consuming to obtain them through your local pharmacy. We offer adult and pediatric nutritional supplements, vitamins, and minerals that will be delivered directly to the home.

All orders are processed directly by our office staff by calling 865-456-1250 or by [www.allergy4food.com](http://www.allergy4food.com). For any questions, please email [allergy4food@yahoo.com](mailto:allergy4food@yahoo.com).



*\*Multiple sources and journals were used in this article. A reference list is available upon request.*

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