

Food Allergies

Food Allergy Basics

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- ◆ The role of the immune system is to protect the body from germs and disease
- ◆ A food allergy is an abnormal response by the immune system to a food protein
- ◆ When the food is eaten, the immune system thinks the food is harmful and releases histamine and other chemicals to “attack” the enemy

Food Allergy Basics

- ◆ There is no cure for food allergy
- ◆ Complete and strict avoidance is the only way to prevent a reaction

Food Allergy Basics

Eight foods cause 90% of the allergic reactions in the United States:

Milk

Peanuts

Eggs

Tree Nuts (e.g. walnuts,
pecans)

Wheat

Fish

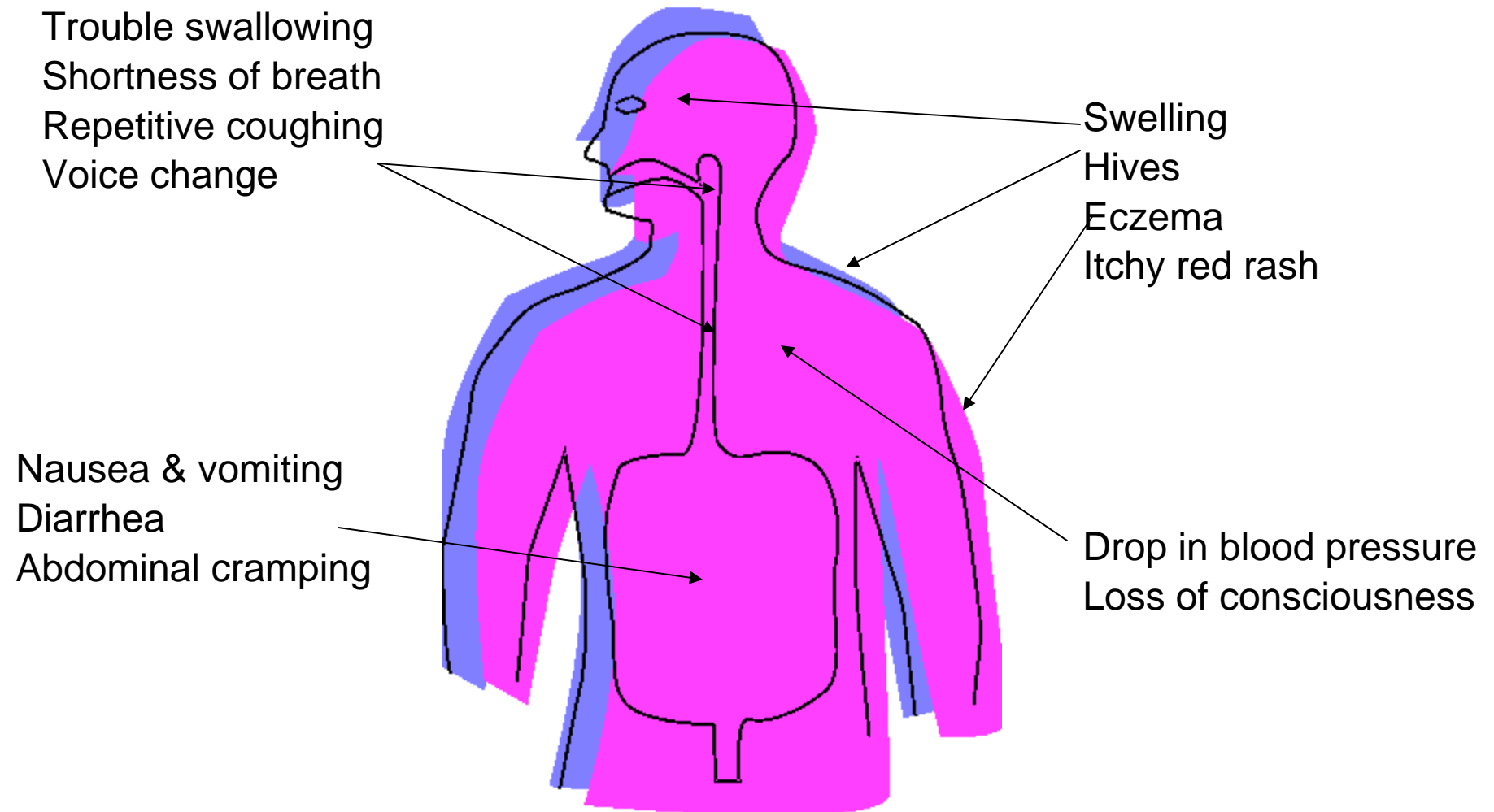
Soy

Shellfish

Food Allergy Facts

- ◆ 4% of US population or 12 million Americans (1 in 25) have a food allergy
- ◆ Children are the largest group affected
 - 4 to 6% of children have a food allergy
 - Growing Problem...Peanut allergy in children doubled in 5 years (1997 – 2002)

Symptoms – one or more may occur shortly after eating



Anaphylaxis

- ◆ A serious allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death
- ◆ Causes of anaphylaxis include foods, insect sting, latex, and medications
- ◆ Each year in the U.S. anaphylaxis to food causes over 50,000 emergency room visits, and 150 deaths
- ◆ Individuals with food allergy plus asthma are at greatest risk for a life-threatening reaction

Epinephrine (adrenaline)

- ◆ Prompt administration is key to surviving anaphylaxis. Fatalities resulted from a delay/failure to give epinephrine.
- ◆ Prescribed as EpiPen[®] or Twinject[®] auto-injectors.



Managing Food Allergies Day-to-Day

Basic Principles

- ◆ Totally avoid food allergens
 - Wise food choices through vigilant label reading, asking questions
 - Careful food preparation and cleanup
- ◆ Be prepared in case of a reaction

Vigilant Label Reading

- ◆ Read every label every time
 - Formulations can change without warning
- ◆ Don't rely on "safe lists"
- ◆ Allergens can be in non-food items
 - Soaps, shampoos, skin products, medications, pet foods

Careful Food Preparation

Wash hands, cooking utensils, and food preparation surfaces to avoid reactions from trace amounts of proteins left behind.

- ◆ Liquid soap, bar soap, or commercial wipes for hands not antibacterial gel sanitizers
- ◆ Dishwashing detergent and hot water for cooking utensils and cutting boards
- ◆ Common household cleaners for counters, tables, and other surfaces

Be Prepared for an Allergic Reaction

- ◆ Accidents are never planned
- ◆ Keys to being prepared:
 - Medications must be immediately available **at all times**
 - Knowing how to recognize symptoms and administer medications quickly
 - A written Food Allergy Action Plan

If a Reaction Occurs

**Activate the Food Allergy Action Plan
Immediately!**

Recognize the symptoms

React quickly

*Review what caused the reaction and how
well the action plan worked*

Managing Food Allergies In Schools

Food Allergy In Schools

- ◆ Affects about 2 million school-age children
- ◆ Up to 25% of peanut/tree nut reactions in schools are first-time reactions
- ◆ Most reactions in schools occur from food in the classroom used for projects or celebrations

Food Allergy In Schools

- ◆ Once a reaction begins, there is no way to know how severe it will become
- ◆ Take all food allergy-induced allergic reactions seriously
- ◆ Every school should have a plan for managing food allergies

The Food Allergy Plan

The plan to manage a student's food allergies should take into account:

- ◆ unique needs of the child
- ◆ school environment (size, staff, etc.)
- ◆ goal of equal participation in all school-related activities

The Food Allergy Plan

Developing the plan is a team effort involving:

- ◆ school staff
- ◆ child's family (parents/guardians)
- ◆ child's physician
- ◆ the child who has allergies, as age-appropriate

School's Responsibility

- ◆ Create an environment where children, including those with food allergies, will be safe
- ◆ Employ prevention and avoidance strategies
- ◆ Be prepared to handle an allergic reaction
- ◆ Address teasing

Family's Responsibility

- ◆ Provide written medical documentation
- ◆ Work with the school to develop a plan
- ◆ Provide properly labeled medications and replace after use or when expired
- ◆ Keep emergency contact information up-to-date
- ◆ Teach the child age-appropriate self-management skills

Strategies to Minimize Risk of Reactions

- ◆ Clean hands before and after eating or handling food
- ◆ Plan for safe parties/celebrations
- ◆ Avoid using foods in classroom art/craft projects or as incentives
- ◆ Prohibit food trading and sharing

Key Points for Schools

- ◆ Reactions can occur anywhere in school
- ◆ Early recognition and treatment of anaphylaxis is imperative and life saving
- ◆ Education of all staff is important

Free Downloads from FAAN www.foodallergy.org

- ◆ Food Allergy Action Plan
- ◆ School Guidelines for Managing Students With Food Allergies
- ◆ Information Sheets
 - ◆ How to Read a Label, Facts and Statistics
- ◆ Be A PAL: Protect A Life From Food Allergies
- ◆ Posters

For More Information



(800) 929-4040

www.foodallergy.org