

How a Child Might Describe an Allergic Reaction

It can be difficult for a young child to describe an allergic reaction in ways adults may understand or that are considered typical symptoms.



If you suspect anaphylaxis, administer epinephrine and call 911.

Examples of signs of an allergic reaction in children, especially in those who may have limited language.



- Putting their hands in their mouth
- Pulling or scratching at their tongue
- Drooling



- Slurring their words
- Voice changes
- Mood changes
- Drooling

Examples of words and sentences children who are verbal may use to describe a reaction.

Tongue and Mouth



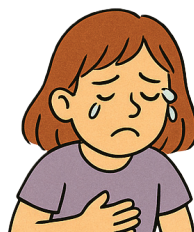
- My tongue [or mouth] is hot [or burning, tingling, itching].
- My tongue feels like there is hair on it.
- My tongue feels full [or heavy or funny].
- My lips feel tight.
- This food is too spicy.

Throat



- There's something stuck in my throat.
- It feels like a bump is on the back of my throat.

Chest



- I am having trouble breathing.
- My chest hurts.
- It is hard to take a deep breath.

Eyes and Ears



- My eyes are burning [or itchy].
- It feels like there are bugs in my ear.

Stomach



- My stomach [tummy] hurts.
- I feel like I have to throw up.
- I feel like I have to go to the bathroom.

Skin



- My skin feels itchy.
- There are bumps on me.

Emotional



- Something is wrong.
- Something bad is happening.



© FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education), July 2025
foodallergy.org | FPP_ChildReaction

Disclaimer: This resource was updated by Cooperative Agreement Number NU38OT000282, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics. Its contents are solely the responsibility of Food Allergy Research and Education and do not necessarily represent the official views of the American Academy of Pediatrics or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the Department of Health and Human Services.