

## Do you know the signs of food allergy?

Food allergies can be life-threatening. The first step is to know what to look for.

After eating some foods, does your child ever have any of these symptoms? Symptoms can come on suddenly, usually within minutes to a couple of hours after eating.

If your child has any of these signs after eating certain foods, he or she might have a food allergy.

### Mild Symptoms



#### NOSE

Itchy/runny nose, sneezing



#### SKIN

A few hives, mild itch



#### GUT

Mild nausea/discomfort



#### MOUTH

Itchy mouth

A COMBINATION of mild symptoms from different body areas is also considered severe.

### Severe Symptoms



#### LUNG

Short of breath, wheezing, repetitive cough



#### HEART

Pale, blue, faint, weak pulse, dizzy



#### THROAT

Tight, hoarse, trouble breathing/swallowing



#### MOUTH

A lot of swelling of the tongue and/or lips



#### SKIN

Itchy skin rash (hives) over body, a lot of redness



#### GUT

Vomiting



#### OTHER

Feeling something bad is about to happen

## How a child might describe a food allergy reaction

Some children have a hard time finding the words to describe how they are feeling during an allergy reaction. They may put their hands in their mouths or pull or scratch at their tongues in response to a reaction. Children's voices may change (e.g., become hoarse or squeaky), and they may slur their words.

They also may say things like:

- "It feels like something's poking my tongue."
- "My tongue itches."
- "My tongue feels like there is hair on it."
- "It feels like a bump is on the back of my tongue."
- "My mouth is tingling."
- "My mouth feels funny."
- "There's something stuck in my throat."
- "My lips feel tight."
- "It feels like there are bugs inside my ear."



### For more information:

#### Information for Those Newly Diagnosed with Food Allergies

[www.foodallergy.org/resources/newly-diagnosed](http://www.foodallergy.org/resources/newly-diagnosed)

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#### Most Popular Resources

[www.foodallergy.org/most-popular-resources](http://www.foodallergy.org/most-popular-resources)

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#### Contact Your Local FARE Office

[www.foodallergy.org/regional-offices](http://www.foodallergy.org/regional-offices)

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#### Find a Local Support Group

[www.foodallergy.org/support-groups](http://www.foodallergy.org/support-groups)



# FARE

Food Allergy Research & Education

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# FARE

Food Allergy Research & Education

# Does Your Child Have a Food Allergy?

## What is a food allergy?

When you have a food allergy, your body mistakenly sees food as a threat. The body's immune system attacks this threat (also called an allergen).

The body's response to an allergy (called a reaction) can range from mild to life-threatening.

If a doctor finds your child has a food allergy, he or she might prescribe a medicine called epinephrine. This medicine can be used during a serious allergic reaction to help keep it from getting worse. A life-threatening reaction is called anaphylaxis (pronounced an-uh-fil-LAX-is).

## What foods are people allergic to?

People can be allergic to any food, but eight foods cause most food allergy reactions. They are:



**Peanuts**



**Tree Nuts**  
(such as walnuts or pecans)



**Shellfish**  
(such as lobster, shrimp or crab)



**Fish**



**Milk**



**Eggs**



**Soy**



**Wheat**



## Who has food allergies? Who is at risk?

Anyone can have a food allergy.

**1 in 13 children in the U.S. has a food allergy.**

Some people with food allergies are at greater risk for a dangerous or life-threatening allergic reaction. These include people with **asthma** and **teens**. Teens are more at risk because they are more likely to take risks. These risks include trying foods that may contain an allergen or not carrying their epinephrine.

## What is the difference between a food intolerance and a food allergy?

Food allergy is sometimes confused with food intolerance. Food intolerance is more common and less serious than food allergy.

An intolerance means your body has trouble digesting a food. It can make you feel badly, usually with an upset stomach, but it is not life-threatening. The most common intolerance is to lactose—which is a natural sugar found in milk.

An allergy means your body's immune system reacts to a food because it has mistaken the food as a threat. Symptoms can range from mild to life-threatening.

Food Intolerance	Food Allergy
Affects only the digestive system	Affects the immune system
Signs come on slowly	Signs can show up very quickly
Less serious	More serious
More common	Less common
Signs and symptoms can include an upset stomach, cramps, bloating and vomiting.	Signs and symptoms can include itchy mouth, swollen lips, runny nose, hives, and trouble breathing.

## What do I do if I think my child is allergic to a food?



For help finding a board-certified allergist, you may search the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology's physician database at [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org).



Do not let your child eat the food that may be causing an allergic reaction until you talk to the doctor.



Talk to your doctor about getting epinephrine ordered to treat food allergy reactions.



Visit [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org) or call 800-929-4040 for more information about what to ask your doctor and for more information about food allergies.

**If your child is having serious signs of a food allergy reaction—like trouble breathing or swelling of the tongue—call 9-1-1 right away!**