

# Caring for a child with food allergy

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A guide on what  
you need to know





# Table of Contents

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Reviewed by Dr. Waleed Alqurashi, Dr. Philippe Bégin, Dr. Moshe Ben-Shoshan, Dr. Edmond Chan, Dr. Julia Upton, Dr. Susan Waserman and Dr. Wade Watson.

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# Understand it.

Parents, please complete this page

**Name**

**Food(s) to avoid due to allergy**



*Other names for the food(s) to avoid (for example, soy may be referred to as bean curd or tofu)*

**Which epinephrine auto-injector is used?**

Ensure you have at least two on hand



**Where is the auto-injector?**

Know the location of the devices a child is carrying; hold onto the devices of a younger child



**Special instructions**

For outings, activities and more



**Emergency contacts**





# Prevent it.

## Avoid an allergic reaction

### Get it.

Get a **list of safe foods** to buy or ask the parents to provide meals/snacks that are safe.



### Read it.

Before buying food, **read the entire ingredient list** and avoid products that contain or "may contain" the food(s) you need to avoid.



### Check it.

Do the **TRIPLE CHECK**, read labels:



1. At the **STORE** before buying a product.



2. When you get **HOME** and put it away.



3. Before you **SERVE** it.

**Check the labels** of non-food products too, like **craft supplies** and **personal care items**.



*If unsure, take a photo of the ingredient list and send it to the parent to double-check that it's safe.*





# Prevent it.

## Avoid an allergic reaction

### Reduce it.

Reduce **cross-contamination** when making or serving food. Cross-contamination is when a food allergen accidentally gets into another food, onto a surface/object, or even in saliva.



**Wash hands** with soap and water before and after making meals/snacks.



**Do not pick an allergen out of a food** as small amounts may remain (e.g. removing nuts from a salad).



**Clean surfaces**, like counters and tables, and keep them clear of allergens when food is being prepared.



**Make allergen-free meals first**, use separate cutting boards, utensils, and cookware.



**Make sure you along with your pets have not consumed a child's allergen** before giving kisses to them (the saliva can get on their skin and into their eyes or mouth).



**Do not share** food/drinks, straws, dishware, cups, or utensils.



Watch these fun, **30-second videos** on how to avoid cross-contamination at [foodallergycanada.ca/videos](https://foodallergycanada.ca/videos).





# Know it.

## Recognize signs and symptoms

Symptoms of **anaphylaxis** generally include 2 or more body systems:

**Skin**




hives, swelling, itching, warmth, redness

 **Remember**, hives don't always appear during anaphylactic reactions.

**Breathing**




coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain or tightness, throat tightness, hoarse voice, nasal congestion or hay fever-like symptoms, (runny, itchy nose and watery eyes, sneezing), trouble swallowing, choking feeling

**Stomach**

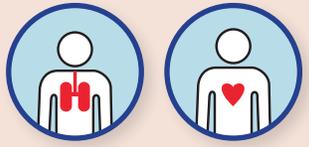



nausea, pain or cramps, vomiting, diarrhea

**Heart**




paler than normal skin colour/blue colour, weak pulse, passing out, dizziness or lightheadedness



Breathing or heart symptoms alone can be **anaphylaxis**.



Treat anaphylaxis **right away**, don't wait for symptoms to progress.



# Know it.

## Recognize signs and symptoms



Depending on the age/maturity level of a child, ensure they know to tell you if they're not feeling well/having a reaction.



### Babies

There may be a noticeable change in the sound of their cry, drooling, vomiting immediately after feeding, or behavioural changes like irritability, unexpectedly become very sleepy or difficult to wake up, and/or clinging to a caregiver.



Vomiting



Drooling



Sudden tiredness



### Children

Children may say things to describe their symptoms, like:



*"my mouth feels funny"*



*"my tongue is itchy"*



*"the food is spicy"*



# Treat it.

## Severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis)

### About **epinephrine**

It is the first-line treatment for anaphylaxis. **Do not use antihistamines, like Benadryl®, as they do not reverse the symptoms of anaphylaxis.** Even if you're unsure about a reaction, **use the epinephrine auto-injector.** Epinephrine is safe and can save a life.



If an anaphylactic reaction happens, follow these **5 emergency steps**:



Give an **epinephrine auto-injector** (e.g. EpiPen®, ALLERJECT®, Emerade™) right away. Follow the instructions on the device.



**Call 9-1-1** or your local EMS immediately and tell them a child is having an anaphylactic reaction.



Use a **second auto-injector** as early as 5 minutes after giving the first dose if there is no improvement in symptoms.



Go to the nearest **hospital** right away (ideally by ambulance), even if symptoms are mild or have stopped. The reaction could get worse or come back.



Call **emergency contact** person (e.g. parent).



*The allergic reaction is the reason for going to the hospital, not because epinephrine has been used.*



# Treat it.

## Severe allergic reactions – body position is important

### When giving epinephrine

Have a child **sit or lie down**. If having trouble breathing, they may prefer to sit.



You may find it helps to **support or brace their leg** to reduce movement before giving the epinephrine auto-injector.

### After giving epinephrine

**Place them on their back** (if not already lying down) and raise their legs. They may prefer to stay sitting up if breathing is difficult.



If a child feels sick or is vomiting, **place them on their side**. If unconscious, they should also be placed on their side.



**During a reaction...**  
If the child is lying down, **do not have them sit up or stand suddenly** during an anaphylactic reaction, even after receiving epinephrine.  
**Sudden changes of position can be life-threatening.**



After giving epinephrine, it may be helpful to **lie down with a young child** to keep them calm.



# ? FAQs

## 1 What is food allergy?



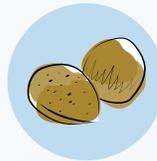
When you have a food allergy, your immune system mistakes something in a particular food (most often, the protein) as harmful. Your body responds to the food (an allergen) by having an allergic reaction.

## 2 What are the most common food allergens?

In Canada, the “priority food allergens” are:



**Peanut**



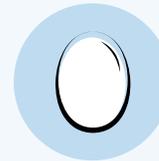
**Tree nuts**



**Sesame**



**Milk**



**Egg**



**Fish**



**Crustaceans**  
(e.g. lobster, shrimp)  
and **Molluscs**  
(e.g. scallops, clams)



**Soy**



**Wheat and  
Triticale**



**Mustard**

## 3 How much of a food allergen does it take to cause a reaction, and how quickly can it happen?



The amount required to cause a reaction varies by person, and in some people, it can be triggered by a small amount. Most allergic reactions happen within minutes, but some can occur a few hours after exposure.

## 4 What is anaphylaxis?



Anaphylaxis is the most serious type of allergic reaction. It can be life-threatening, but there are ways to minimize risks and be prepared for an emergency.

# ✓ Actions you can take



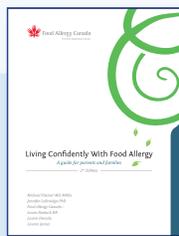
Sign up for **email updates** at [foodallergyca.ca/subscribe](https://foodallergyca.ca/subscribe) to receive essential information on food allergy, like the latest news and more



Take the free 30-minute **Anaphylaxis in the Community** online course at [AllergyAware.ca](https://AllergyAware.ca) to learn the basics of food allergy and anaphylaxis



Read the **Living confidently with food allergy** guide for parents and families at [foodallergyca.ca/newlydiagnosed](https://foodallergyca.ca/newlydiagnosed)



Register for a **small group webinar** on how to manage food allergy and anaphylaxis at [foodallergyca.ca/events](https://foodallergyca.ca/events)



Practice with an epinephrine auto-injector training device from [epipen.ca](https://epipen.ca), [allerject.ca](https://allerject.ca) or [emerade.ca](https://emerade.ca)



Learn more at [foodallergyca.ca](https://foodallergyca.ca)