

Caring for a child with food allergy

A guide on what
you need to know

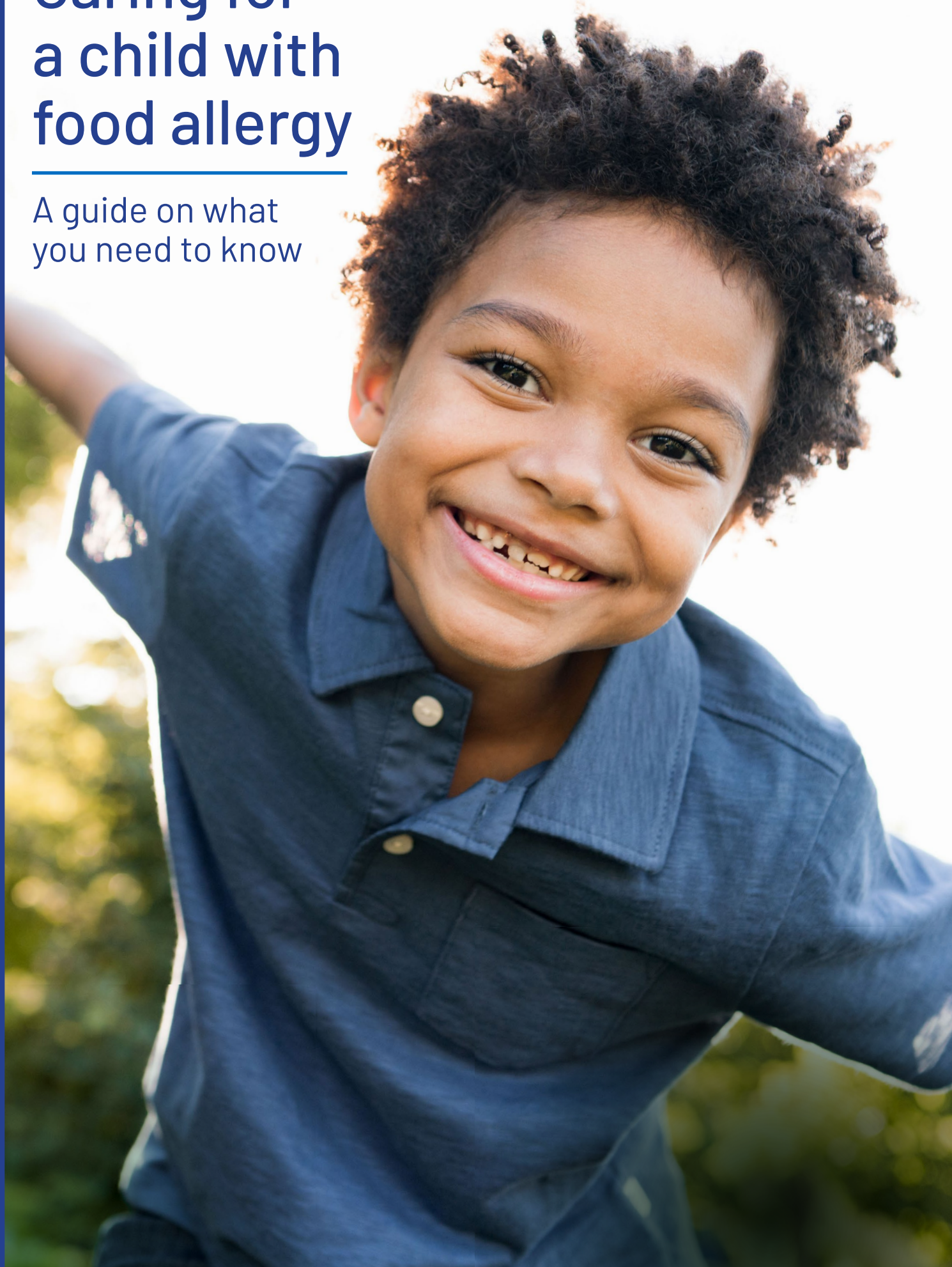




Table of Contents

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.



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.

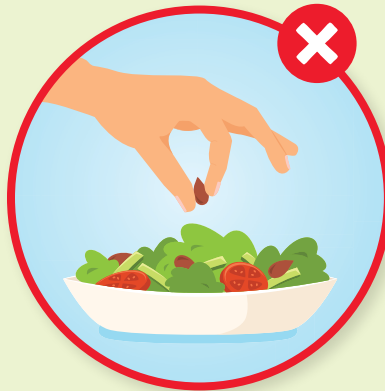
Avoid an allergic reaction

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.







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

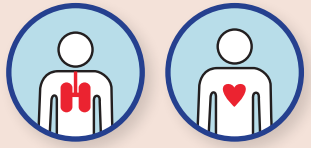



nausea, pain or cramps, vomiting, diarrhea

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.

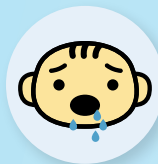


Babies

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"

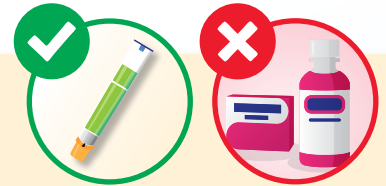


Treat it.

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®) 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?



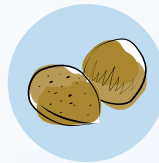
When you have a food allergy, your immune system mistakes something in a particular food (most often, the protein) as harmful. Your body responds to the food (an allergen) by having an allergic reaction.

2 What are the most common food allergens?

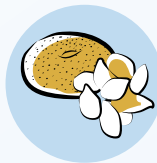
In Canada, the “priority food allergens” are:



Peanut



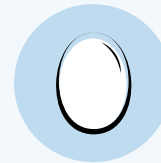
Tree nuts



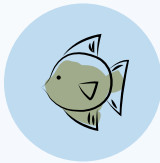
Sesame



Milk



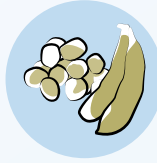
Egg



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



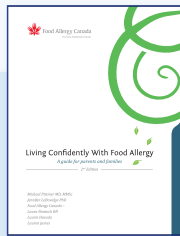
Sign up for **email updates** at foodallergyca.ca/subscribe to receive essential information on food allergy, like the latest news and more



Take the free 30-minute **Anaphylaxis in the Community** online course at AllergyAware.ca 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



Register for a **small group webinar** on how to manage food allergy and anaphylaxis at foodallergyca.ca/events



Practice with an epinephrine auto-injector training device from epipen.ca



Learn more at foodallergyca.ca