

Food Allergy

Patient Information



Food allergy

An allergy is a condition which manifests as an exaggerated defence reaction of the body to allergens.

A food allergy is suspected when in association with food intake the following symptoms appear:

Respiratory tract (rare):	Cough, wheezing/whistling, shortness of breath, asthma
Skin:	Nettle rash, eczema, itching, redness and others
Gastro-intestinal tract:	Stomach trouble, vomiting, abdominal pain, colics, cramps, bloating, diarrhoea
Head	Red eyes, swollen eye lids, itching, swollen lips, swollen tongue, swollen throat (may result in shortness of breath), running nose, swollen nasal mucosa (stuffy nose)

Food allergies and non-allergic food hypersensitivity (by preservatives, dyestuffs etc.) are ever increasing problems. The causes are difficult to detect in many cases. You should keep an "Allergy Diary" to record accurately all your complaints with a possible temporal relation to the intake of food or beverages.

Allergy Diary

- Which complaints have you experienced?
- Did you observe an obvious or likely temporal relation to food, food odors (i.e. garlic, spice powders), drinks and the intake/contact of/with them?
- Did the symptoms appear during the meal, immediately after it, within a short time (some minutes, 1-2 hours) or until several hours (up to 12 hours)?
- Which foodstuffs did you consume – raw or cooked, cold or warm?
- Did you notice – also in retrospect – similar ailments earlier (associated with food intake or not)? Did you then (possibly) consume the same or similar foods (i.e. stone fruits)? The time of appearance, intensity and duration of complaints may vary.
- Do or did you suffer from an other sensitization or allergy, in particular against hazel, alder, birch, grasses/grains or weed pollen (i.e. mugwort)?
- Do you experience such complaints throughout the whole year or in certain months only? Is their intensity varying?
- Observe and record your reactions to all types of food.
- When your observations allow the conclusion that your symptoms are possibly triggered by certain foods or beverages, you should avoid them.

You should maintain the recordings in your “Allergy Diary” for a prolonged period of time (several weeks or months). These recordings yield information on the presence or absence of the suspected food allergy for you and your doctor. The diary is the central building block of the diagnosis. Skin tests, blood tests and a so-called elimination diet will be performed for additional work-up.

The table on the next page may help you to identify hidden allergens.

Treatment

Treatment of food allergies is – quite naturally – difficult. Of paramount importance is the avoidance of allergy-inducing foods. For the treatment of symptoms, tablets, sprays or locally applied medications may be used.

Causal treatment by so-called specific immunotherapy is not yet possible. There is some evidence, however, that hyposensitization therapy against pollen has favourable effects on some food allergies.

The table on the last page provides you with some information on pollen allergens to which you may react allergic.



Hidden allergens

Allergy-inducing substance(s)	Occurrence	Potential alternatives
Raw cow's milk		Soy milk, boiled milk
Milk protein	Dairy products, cream, curd, cottage cheese, cheese, butter, sausage products, margarine, bread, bakery products, chocolate, sweets, puddings, ice cream	Soy milk, soy products, clarified butter, vegetable oil (thistle oil, sunflower oil), vegetable fats, possibly feta cheese or goats milk cheese
Chicken egg, chicken egg white	Noodles, bakery products, mayonnaise, puddings, ice cream, sausage products, meat dishes, chocolate	Soy products, soy flour as binder
Yeast	Pastries, cakes, bread, cookies, buttermilk, cheese, yoghurt, meat products, batter, beer, wine, cider, malt drinks, diet aids and yeast	Yeast-free products
Fish	All types of fish, but also in chicken eggs, poultry, pork meat (fishmeal is used a.o. for the production of poultry and pork feeds)	
Grain proteins	Bakery products, bread, noodles, batter, convenience products such as soups, sauces, vegetable dishes, sweets, pudding	In most cases an allergy to a particular crop variety is present: replace wheat flour by other types of flour
Nuts	Nuts, sweets such as marzipan or chocolate	
Vegetables, pulses	Convenience products such as sauces, vegetable broth, meat broth, spices	

Hidden allergens

Allergy-inducing substance(s)	Occurrence	Potential alternatives
Soy	Bakery products, margarine, sauces, products for diabetics, ready meals, sausage products, chocolate	Soy-free products
Moulds	Bread, flour, fruit, vegetables, nuts, cheese, vinegar, wine, beer	Different in the individual case due to large variety of manifestations and the difficult diagnosis
Meat	All types of meat may induce allergies. Beef, pork and veal meat, poultry (cf. „Fish“), bushmeat	In most cases this is not a total meat allergy. Replace by meats that are tolerated.
Fruit	Frequent, additionally contact allergy to citrus fruits (when touched)	
Spices, herbs	Mustard, curry, spice mixtures, convenience products; frequently contact allergies against herbs and garlic, cinnamon and vanilla	Determination of the allergy-inducing agent is a complex task. The best method is the so-called elimination diet.
Glutamate	Particularly popular in the Chinese cuisine, canned food	
Flower pollen	Mixed flower honey, grains	

A selection of cross-reactive allergens

The following overview shows some foods which people with pollen/latex allergies may not be able to tolerate due to their cross-reactivity.

Food	Birch	Grasses/ Rye	Mugwort	Latex
Pome fruits (e.g. apple, pear)	■	□	□	
Stone fruits (e.g. plum, peach, apricot)	□	□	□	□
Banana	□			■
Kiwi	■	■	□	■
Lychee	□			
Mango	□		□	■
Melon		■		■
Avocado				■
Pea			□	
Carrot, raw	■		■	
Potato, raw	□			□
Celery	■	□	■	□
Tomato, raw	■	■	□	□
Aniseed, pepper, coriander	□		■	
Red Pepper	□		□	
Camomile	□	□	■	
Grain flour		■		
Peanut			□	□
Brazil nut, hazelnut, walnut, almond	□		□	
Sweet chestnut				■

LEGEND: ■ Cross-reaction frequent □ Cross-reaction possible

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