Food Allergies

Food allergies occur from eating something you are sensitive to. Food allergies occur in all age groups. It may be passed to you from your parents (*heredity*).

CAUSES

Some common causes are cow's milk, seafood, eggs, nuts (including peanut butter), wheat, and soybeans.

SYMPTOMS

Common problems (*symptoms*) are:

- Swelling around the mouth.
- Itchy red rash.
- Hives.
- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea.
- Severe allergic reactions are **LIFE-THREATENING**. This reaction is called anaphylaxis. It can cause the mouth and throat to swell. This makes it hard to breathe and swallow. In severe reactions, only a small amount of food may be fatal within seconds.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If unsure what caused the reaction, keep a diary of foods eaten and symptoms that followed. Avoid foods that cause reactions.
- If hives or rash are present:
  - Take medications as directed.
  - Use an over-the-counter antihistamine (*diphenhydramine*) for hives and itch as needed.
  - Apply cold compresses to the skin or take baths in cool water. Avoid hot baths or showers. These will increase the redness and itching.
- **If you are severely allergic:**
  - Hospitalization is often required following a severe reaction.
  - Wear a medic-alert bracelet or necklace that describes the allergy.
  - Carry your anaphylaxis kit or EpiPen® with you at all times. Both you and your family members should know how to use this. This can be life-saving if you have a severe reaction. **If the EpiPen® is used, it is important for you to seek immediate medical care or dial your local emergency service (911 in U.S.)** When the epinephrine wears off, it can be followed by a delayed reaction, which can be fatal.
- Refill your EpiPen® in case of another reaction. Ask your caregiver for instructions if you have not been taught how to use the EpiPen®.
- Always keep several EpiPens® available for use when away from home, including school.
- **Do not** drive until medications used to treat the reaction have worn off, unless approved by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You suspect a food allergy. Symptoms generally happen within 30 minutes of eating a food.
- Your symptoms have not gone away within 2 days. See your caregiver sooner if symptoms are getting worse.
- You develop new symptoms.
- You want to retest yourself or your child with a food or drink you think causes an allergic reaction. **Never** do this if an anaphylactic reaction to that food or drink has happened before.
- There is a return of the symptoms which brought you to your caregiver.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have trouble breathing, are wheezing, or you have a tight feeling in your chest or throat.
- You have a swollen mouth, or you have hives, swelling, or itching all over your body. **Use your EpiPen® immediately**. This is given into the outside of your thigh, deep into the muscle. This will work best. Following use of the EpiPen®, seek help right away.
- **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY. Call your local emergency service.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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