

Severe allergic reactions: *WHAT TO DO*



Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can be deadly. Symptoms include facial or lip swelling, paleness, weakness, difficulty breathing, vomiting and fainting. If someone is having anaphylaxis, it's important to:

- Ask if the person has epinephrine (EpiPen or another injector) and see if they need help injecting it. It is usually injected into a person's thigh. This should be done quickly.
- Call 911 immediately.
- Even if the person starts to feel better, he or she should still go to the hospital and seek medical care. The epinephrine delays the reaction, but the allergy must still be treated by a doctor right away.

The rise of food allergies



The body's immune system is designed to fight off unwanted invaders, such as viruses, bacteria and fungi. But when the immune system reacts to something that isn't usually harmful, such as pollen, dust, or certain foods, it's considered an allergy.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says 5 out of every 100 children in the U.S. have a food allergy today. About 4 percent of all adults also have food allergies.

While some reactions may be mild, such as hives or tingling, other food allergies can cause a life-threatening allergic reaction known as anaphylaxis.

Increase in allergies - and questions

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that food allergies increased 18 percent among children from 1997 to 2007.

Researchers are still trying to find out why food allergies continue to increase. However, they do know a few key facts about food allergies:

- Up to 90 percent of all food allergies involve eggs, dairy, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat and soy.
- Food allergies can occur at any age, not just during childhood. Even if you've eaten a food before without problems, you can become allergic to it later.
- If you have a parent with allergies, asthma, or eczema, you are more likely to have food allergies.
- Kids with food allergies are up to 4 times more likely to have asthma and other allergies, such as hay fever.
- Allergies to fish, shellfish, peanuts, and tree nuts tend to last a person's entire life. Dairy, egg, and soy allergies are sometimes outgrown.
- There is no cure for allergies: the allergic food must be avoided.

A recent analysis in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* shows that introducing some allergenic foods to a baby earlier in life could lower the risk of food allergies. Talk to your pediatrician before giving your child new foods, especially if allergies run in the family.