

# Understanding Food Allergies

### What is a food allergy?

The body mistaking a food as harmful. Once a person has a food allergy, an allergic reaction occurs every time they eat that food.

## Common Food Allergens

Foods that most commonly cause food allergy are:

- milk and milk products
- egg
- peanut
- tree nuts – like almonds, cashews and walnuts
- soy
- seafood – like fish, shellfish and crustaceans such as crab and lobster
- wheat
- sesame



### DID YOU KNOW

Food allergy and other allergic conditions – such as eczema, asthma and hay fever – tend to run in families. Talk about your family history with your health care provider to find out if your baby is at risk.

## Introducing Common Food Allergens

To reduce the risk of a food allergy developing, introduce the common food allergens when your baby has shown that she's ready for solid foods – usually around 6 months.

After your child is eating a few other solid foods (see [Introducing Solid Foods](#)), start offering her the common food allergens one at a time. Begin with the common allergens your family eats most often. Try, for example:

- peanut and tree-nut butters blended into infant cereal or spread thinly on strips of toast
- well-cooked egg and seafood
- milk products like yogurt and grated cheese. Wait until 9 to 12 months to offer whole (3.25%) milk.



### TRY THIS

See *Reducing Risk of Food Allergy in Your Baby* at [healthlinkbc.ca](http://healthlinkbc.ca) to learn more.

## Signs of Food Allergy

Allergic reactions usually appear within a few minutes of being exposed to a food, but can happen up to 2 hours later. The most common signs include:

- hives, swelling, redness or rash
- stuffy or runny nose with itchy, watery eyes
- vomiting
- coughing



### MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Some allergic reactions – to food, insect stings, medications and other allergens – can be life threatening. Call 9-1-1 immediately if your child has any of the following:

- swelling of the mouth, tongue or throat
- hives that are spreading
- trouble breathing, swallowing or speaking, or a hoarse or rough voice
- repetitive coughing or wheezing
- pale or bluish face or lips
- faintness, weakness or has passed out