



Food Allergies

Birth to Two Years: A Resource for All Parents

What is a food allergy?

A food allergy happens when the body's immune system thinks a food is harmful.

What are some common signs of an allergic reaction to a food?

- Hives, itching, swelling, redness and/or rash
- Stuffy runny nose with itchy watery eyes
- Vomiting (that is usually forceful and repeated), sometimes with diarrhea

When may the signs appear?

- Often occur within minutes or within 2 hours after tasting a food.

If your baby has any of these signs, stop offering the food and talk to your baby's doctor.

Call 911 if any of these emergency signs occur:

- Swelling of the mouth, tongue and throat
- Pale or blue colour of the face or lips
- Difficulty swallowing, hoarse voice or cry
- Hives that are spreading
- Difficulty breathing
- Faintness, weakness or passing out

If my baby/toddler is showing signs or has a diagnosed allergy before or after starting solids:

- See a dietitian for an individualized care plan for your baby and guidance on feeding, or call HealthLink BC by dialing 8-1-1 and asking to speak with a registered dietitian.

How do I know if my baby is at an increased risk for food allergies?

- Babies are at increased risk when they have at least 1 parent, brother or sister with eczema or a diagnosed allergy, hay fever or asthma.

Reducing the risk of food allergy

Should I avoid certain foods while breastfeeding?

- Current research shows you do not need to avoid specific foods while breastfeeding to prevent food allergies in your baby.
- Some babies may react to a food in your diet. If you suspect a certain food is causing a reaction, continue breastfeeding and contact your public health nurse or Dietitian Services for advice - call 811.



What if I need to offer infant formula to my baby who is at increased risk for allergy?

- For individualized information on an appropriate formula choice, call 811 and ask to speak to a dietitian.

How to introduce solids

- It is very important to offer a variety of solid foods for your baby's overall healthy development.
- Talk to a Dietitian, Public Health Nurse or your family doctor if you are afraid to introduce a specific food.

Introducing common food allergens

For all babies without suspected or diagnosed food allergies:

- Introduce common food allergens one at a time starting at about six months of age. Delayed introduction of common food allergens may increase risk of food allergy developing. Keep in mind that baby's first foods should be iron rich. Some examples are meat, chicken, iron fortified infant cereals, lentils, and thinly spread pumpkin seed butter.

Common food allergens:

- Milk products*
- Eggs.....
- Wheat.....
- Peanut.....
- Tree nuts (eg. almond, walnut and pecan) ...
- Soy.....
- Seafood.....
- Sesame.....

Suggested foods to offer:

- Full fat yogurt and grated cheese
- Hard boiled or scrambled egg (whole egg)
- Crackers or toast
- Peanut butter spread thin on a cracker
- Almond butter spread thin on toast
- Tofu
- Fish, clams, scallops, shrimp and crab
- Bread or crackers with sesame seeds

Tips:

- Note on your calendar or food diary when you introduce these common food allergens.
- Offer one of these common food allergens from the above list daily, for 2–3 days watching for signs of an allergic reaction. Then try another. For possible signs of food allergy, see first page.
- Continue to regularly offer foods that your baby has tried and tolerates; this will maintain tolerance and reduce their risk of allergy to these foods in the future.
- If baby reacts to a food, stop this food and continue offering other foods. Make a note of this on your calendar or food diary. Discuss with your baby's doctor.
- Call HealthLink BC by dialing 8-1-1 and asking to speak with a registered dietitian.

* fluid homogenized 3.25% milk after 9 months

For all other foods there is no need to introduce one food at a time.

Other fact sheets are available at your local Community Health Centre or online:

- VCH Parenting Website: <http://parenting.vch.ca/>
- Dietitian Services: <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/>

Or call:

Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC: Call 811 to speak to a dietitian

- Translation services are available in 130 languages; go to <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/emaildietitian.html> to email your question.

or a Public Health Nurse at your local health centre (www.vch.ca)

Choose foods grown or produced in BC whenever you can.

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