

Your quick guide to food allergies and intolerances



A food allergy is caused when your immune system mistakenly thinks that certain foods are a threat to your body. A food intolerance doesn't usually involve your immune system, however, coeliac disease is an intolerance to gluten and does involve the immune system.

Allergy facts

Between
1-2%
of adults*...



...and
5-8%
of children in the UK
have a food allergy*



At least
1 in 100
people has coeliac disease**

What is a...

Food allergy

Food allergic reactions range from **mild to very serious**. Symptoms can affect different areas of the body at the same time and can include **rashes, swelling, chest tightness and shortness of breath**. Serious cases can lead to anaphylaxis (a life-threatening reaction) and death.

Food intolerance

Food intolerance can be caused by **difficulties digesting certain ingredients**, such as **lactose** from milk. Symptoms include **diarrhoea, bloating and stomach cramps** and usually only occur several hours after eating the food.

Coeliac disease

Coeliac disease is caused by a **reaction of the immune system to gluten**. Symptoms include **bloating, diarrhoea, tiredness, mouth ulcers, anaemia, osteoporosis** and usually occur several hours after eating the food.

All types of food can cause a reaction. However, certain proteins are responsible for most food allergies and intolerances. The most common food allergies in children are caused by:



Milk



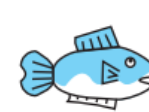
Eggs



Peanuts



Tree nuts



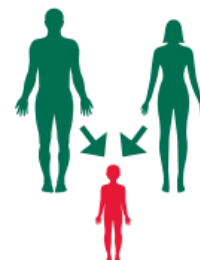
Fish



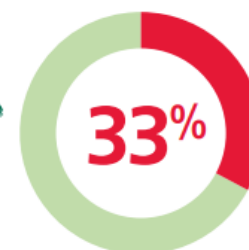
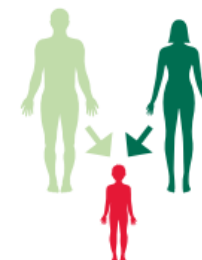
Hospital admissions
due to food allergies
in the UK increased by

500% between
1990 and **2007*****

Odds that a child with **two allergic parents**
will develop allergies:



Odds that a child with **one allergic parent**
will develop allergies:



Treatment

There is no cure for food allergies, food intolerance or coeliac disease. The only way to prevent a reaction is to avoid the foods that make you ill.



However if you have a mild or moderate food allergic reaction you can use **antihistamines** to relieve the symptoms. In case of a more serious reaction (including anaphylaxis), a medication called **adrenaline**, contained in an **auto-injector pen** can be used.



For more information, visit: food.gov.uk/allergy or nhs.uk/conditions/allergies

✉ Sign up to our allergy alerts on food.gov.uk/email, or follow **#AllergyAlert** on Twitter and Facebook

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