

FOOD ALLERGIES AND FOOD INTOLERANCES

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feeding matters

*Conquering pediatric feeding struggles
to nourish healthy futures*

what is the role of the immune system?

The immune system's role is to fight off disease and germs. When a child has food allergies, their immune system is reacting as if a certain food is harmful. This reaction is typically caused by a food protein.

what are the most common symptoms of food allergies?

1. itchy hives
2. eczema
3. asthma
4. swelling
5. vomiting
6. bloating
7. cramping
8. anaphylaxis

what are the most common food allergies?

1. milk
2. wheat
3. egg
4. soy
5. peanuts
6. tree nuts
7. shellfish
8. fish

how common are food allergies in children?

One out of 13 children will have food allergies and roughly 40 percent of children in the United States with food allergies have a severe reaction. Treatment for food allergies is simply a strict avoidance of the food. In some instances, children may outgrow their food allergies between birth and the age of eight.

what is a food intolerance?

Food intolerances are not an immune response. They affect the GI system and can lead to bloating, constipation, cramping, and/or vomiting. Treatment will depend on the individual and the type of food intolerance. Typically, the symptoms can be lessened by decreasing or avoiding the intake of the food that causes the intolerance.

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can children have food allergies and food intolerances?

Absolutely. It is recommended that parents work closely with physicians and medical experts on what foods their children should avoid completely and those they can have in small quantities.

how are food allergies and food intolerances diagnosed?

There are two evidence based tests that are used to determine food allergies -- blood tests or skin prick tests. Both are reliable and can be used in combination with the clinical information of a child's observed symptoms to help identify the allergy.

Food intolerances can be more difficult to diagnose. Some food intolerances can be tested by a gastroenterologist while the majorities are tested through trial and error. The most common testing is an elimination diet.

what parents should know....

If specific foods are removed from a child's diet that are believed to be intolerable, it may increase the risk for poor growth or nutritional deficiencies. It is best to seek assistance from the child's physician. Secondly, the removal of specific foods from a child's diet may increase the stress and care when feeding the child. If the stress increases during feedings, ask for help with establishing parameters of the child's diet so over time the stress decreases. Thirdly, it is important to understand how a child can receive proper nourishment when removing a certain food from their diet. Be sure to request help and recommendations from the child's physicians and an opportunity to meet with a dietitian that specializes in food elimination diets.

If food allergies are present, ask for an appointment with a board certified physician to help identify any roadblocks and to make sure that certain foods are not avoided for unnecessary reasons. It can be very stressful when no food allergies are present but the child is still showing symptoms. Sometimes, it is helpful to keep a food diary to help provide more information to the physician. This will help work through the grey areas between food allergies and food intolerances.

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