

# A Parent's Guide to Introducing Allergy Foods to Babies



## Highlights

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that requires immediate medical attention.

Introducing allergy foods can start from 6 months of age.

Introduce common allergy foods before your baby turns one to reduce the risk of allergies.

Introduce one new food at a time to help identify potential allergens.

Symptoms of allergic reactions can include hives, vomiting, and swelling.

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### **The Difference Between Food Allergy and Food Intolerance**

Food allergies and food intolerance are not the same.

An allergy involves the body's immune system and can be serious.

An intolerance is a reaction that doesn't involve the immune system. It may cause unpleasant symptoms, but not a dangerous reaction.

### **Prevalence of Food Allergies**

Food allergies affect about 1 to 2 in every 20 children.

Babies are more likely to develop allergies if there's a family history of allergic diseases such as eczema, asthma, hay fever, or food allergies (known together as 'atopy'). Babies with no family history of atopy can also develop allergies.

### **When to Start Introducing Allergy Foods**

You can introduce allergy foods when you are introducing solids, usually from around 6 months of age but not before 4 months.

Introduce common allergy foods before your baby turns 12 months old to potentially reduce their chance of developing an allergy.

### **The Best Allergy Foods to Introduce First**

Start with the allergy food you want your baby to try first. Foods should be age-appropriate, like smooth peanut butter or well-cooked eggs. Avoid giving whole or chopped nuts, as they may cause choking.

### **How to Safely Introduce Allergy Foods**

Try one new allergy food at a time so that if your baby has a reaction, you can easily identify the food causing it.

Keep giving the food about twice a week. If the food isn't given regularly, an allergy may develop.

Introduce a new allergy food each day but continue giving the previously introduced foods in their regular diet.

### **The Best Time of Day to Introduce Allergy Foods**

Introduce new allergy foods during daytime meals to monitor your baby more easily in case of a reaction.

### **Recognizing an Allergic Reaction in Your Baby**

Symptoms usually occur within minutes but can take up to 2 hours to develop.

Mild-to-moderate symptoms include hives, swelling of the lips, face or eyelids, tingling around the mouth, stomach pain, vomiting, and diarrhea.

More serious symptoms may indicate anaphylaxis, a severe allergic reaction.

### **What to Do in Case of an Allergic Reaction**

If your baby shows symptoms of anaphylaxis:

Call emergency services immediately.

If your baby has an adrenaline injection device (e.g., EpiPen Jr, Anapen Junior), use it right away.

Lay your baby flat while waiting for the ambulance. If they have difficulty breathing, they can sit.

For mild or moderate reactions:

Stop giving the food.

Monitor for symptoms of anaphylaxis and consult a doctor.

### **Steps to Take After a Food Allergy Diagnosis**

See your doctor for advice and an action plan on how to treat an allergic reaction.

Your doctor may refer you to an allergy specialist for further tests.

Avoid experimenting with eliminating major foods, like milk or wheat, without professional guidance.

Consult a dietitian to ensure your baby gets all necessary nutrients if they need to avoid certain foods.

## **Can Your Baby Outgrow a Food Allergy?**

Many children outgrow some food allergies, but others may continue throughout their life.

Most children outgrow allergies to milk, soy, wheat, or eggs.

Allergies to peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, and seafood are most likely to persist into adulthood.

## **Tools and Assistance**

Speak to your doctor or child health nurse for guidance and an action plan.

Consult a dietitian for advice if your baby needs to avoid certain foods.

Keep track of the foods your baby tries and any allergic reactions.