



FACTS ABOUT FOOD ALLERGIES

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Food allergies are a serious health concern that affects millions of people worldwide. According to the Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE), up to 15 million Americans have food allergies, and this number is on the rise. While some people may have mild reactions, others may have life-threatening reactions that require immediate medical attention. In this article, we will explore the most important and surprising facts about food allergies, including common allergens, symptoms, causes, diagnosis, treatment options, prevention tips, and more.

Common Food Allergies

There are several common food allergens that people should be aware of, including:

Peanuts

Peanuts are one of the most common food allergens, and even a small amount can trigger a severe reaction. Peanut allergies affect both children and adults and can cause anaphylaxis, a severe and potentially life-threatening reaction.

Tree Nuts

Tree nuts, such as almonds, cashews, and walnuts, are also common food allergens. Like peanut allergies, tree nut allergies can cause severe reactions, including anaphylaxis.

Milk

Milk allergies are more common in children than adults, and the symptoms can range from mild to severe. Some people with milk allergies may be able to tolerate small amounts of dairy, while others may need to avoid it completely.

Shellfish

Shellfish allergies are more common in adults than children. Shellfish, such as shrimp, crab, and lobster, can cause severe reactions, including anaphylaxis.

Eggs

Egg allergies are more common in children than adults, and the symptoms can range from mild to severe. Some people with egg allergies may be able to tolerate baked goods that contain eggs, while others may need to avoid them completely.

Wheat

Wheat allergies can cause a range of symptoms, including hives, itching, and digestive problems. People with wheat allergies may need to avoid a wide range of foods that contain wheat, such as bread, pasta, and cereal.



Symptoms of Food Allergies

The symptoms of a food allergy can range from mild to severe and can occur within minutes or up to several hours after exposure to an allergen. Some common symptoms of a food allergy include:

Hives or rash

Hives or a rash is a common symptoms of a food allergy. The rash may be itchy and can appear on any part of the body.

Swelling

Swelling, especially around the face, lips, and tongue, is another common symptom of a food allergy. In severe cases, the airways can also become swollen, making it difficult to breathe.

Nausea and vomiting

Nausea and vomiting are common symptoms of a food allergy, especially in children.



Diarrhea

Diarrhea is a common symptom of a food allergy, especially in infants and young children.

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction that can occur within minutes of exposure to an allergen. Symptoms of anaphylaxis can include difficulty breathing, rapid heartbeat, and loss of consciousness.

Causes of Food Allergies

Food allergies occur when the immune system mistakenly identifies a protein in food as harmful and produces an allergic response. The exact cause of food allergies is not known, but several factors may contribute, including:

Genetics

Research suggests that genetics may play a role in the development of food allergies. Children with a family history of allergies are more likely to develop food allergies.



Environmental factors

Exposure to certain environmental factors, such as pollution, may increase the risk of developing food allergies.

Early exposure to allergens

Some studies suggest that early exposure to allergens may increase the risk of developing food allergies.

Food Allergy Prevention Tips

While there is no guaranteed way to prevent food allergies, there are several steps that people can take to reduce their risk of developing them. Some tips for preventing food allergies include:

Train your staff

Ensure that your staff is well-trained in food allergies and the importance of preventing cross-contamination. This includes understanding the different types of allergies, how to properly handle and store food, and how to read ingredient labels.

Be clear about ingredients

Make sure that your menu clearly lists all the ingredients in each dish. This will help customers with allergies make informed decisions about what to order. Additionally, if a customer has a specific allergy, make sure to confirm with them that the dish they are ordering is safe for them to eat.

Separate cooking equipment

It's important to have separate cooking equipment for dishes that are allergy-free to prevent cross-contamination. This includes separate cutting boards, utensils, and fryers. Additionally, have a designated area in the kitchen where allergy-free dishes are prepared to ensure that there is no cross-contact with allergens.

Conclusion

Food allergies are a serious health concern that affects millions of people worldwide. Understanding the facts about food allergies is crucial for both those who suffer from them and those who do not. By educating ourselves and others, planning ahead, and taking steps to train your staff, we can help to prevent allergic reactions and keep everyone safe.



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