

Food allergy

A food allergy reaction occurs when your immune system overreacts to a food or a substance in a food resulting in allergic symptoms. It is not common for a person to be allergic to a food he or she has previously eaten successfully.

Allergic symptoms include:

- Skin: hives, red skin, rash, swelling
- Stomach: itchy mouth, swelling of tongue, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach cramps
- Respiratory: itchy/runny nose, sneezing, change in voice, shortness of breath, wheeze, cough
- Heart: weak pulse, dizziness or feeling faint, pale/blue skin
- Others: change in behaviour, headache, uterine cramps, feeling of impending doom

Eight most common food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, milk, eggs, wheat, and soy. Those eight foods are responsible for causing 90% of all food allergies

| Common allergen foods | Example of foods |
|-----------------------|---|
| Egg | Bagels, pretzels, baked goods, bouillon, cereals, cake, chocolate, custard, butter, pancakes, waffles, ice cream, mayonnaise, marshmallow, salad dressing, sherbets |
| Milk | Yogurt, butter, margarine, cheese, creams, custards, meatballs, pizza, frozen desserts, whey, casein, caramel flavoring |
| Soy | Soy flour, tofu, soy nuts, imitation seafood, dairy substitutes, textured vegetable protein, vegetable starch, vegetable broth, Asian cuisine |
| Peanut | cakes, pastries, biscuits, ice cream, cereal bars, cereals, candy, Artificial nuts, imitation nuts |
| Tree nuts | walnut, pecan, almonds, hazelnut, brazil nut, pine nut, cashews, chestnut, coconut, macadamia, pistachios |
| Fish | Hake, salmon, tuna, snoek, herring, anchovy, mackerel, sardine, trout |
| Shellfish | shrimp, lobster, crab, crayfish, prawns, abalone, mussels, oysters, snails, squid, octopus |

Diagnosis

- ✓ History
- ✓ Skin test
- ✓ Blood test
- ✓ Oral food challenge

Management

- Avoidance of food triggering allergic reaction
- Medical management: Adrenaline
- Education on reading food labels

Parents, school staff, and community members should be made aware that food-allergic students are high-risk targets for harassment and/or bullying.

Book your appointment with Dr Mabelane for evaluation