



live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance specialists at Bouchard Insurance

Allergies: Foods

While there is no cure for a food allergy, diet and medication can help an individual control allergic reactions and live a healthy life.

Food Allergies

A food allergy occurs when a person's immune system incorrectly identifies a food as harmful and creates specific antibodies to fight off that food. Then, the next time that particular food is eaten, large amounts of chemicals are released in an attempt to protect the body. These chemicals cause the allergic symptoms. Research suggests that 90 percent of all allergic reactions are caused by foods, including milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy and wheat.

Food allergies are most common in the first few years of life due to immaturity of the digestive system, but sensitivity typically declines by age 10. Food allergies are commonly found in people with a family medical history of asthma, dermatitis, or pollen and mold allergies.

Signs & Symptoms

The symptoms of a food allergy

up to two hours after eating the allergy-causing food and can include:

- A tingling sensation in the mouth
- Swelling of the lips, tongue and throat
- Itching, hives and a rash throughout the body
- Cramping, diarrhea or vomiting
- Wheezing and difficulty breathing
- Nasal congestion
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Loss of consciousness

Treatment

No medications are currently available that cure food allergies. Fortunately, once you identify which foods trigger your allergies, you can avoid those foods and prevent an allergic reaction. However, in the case of anaphylaxis (a sudden and severe allergic reaction), epinephrine should be administered as soon as possible. A health professional can administer this medication

in an urgent care facility or emergency room, or if prescribed by a physician, it can be self-injected into the body as soon as symptoms appear.

Prevention

Get into the habit of knowing what is in the food you make and order. When shopping and when preparing food, check ingredient labels. Many companies will list if their products are processed in a plant that contains nuts. When eating out, be sure to ask about ingredients and food preparation so you know what to expect.



Did you know...?

Children with food allergies require special attention since they often are not making food choices for themselves. Parents, other family members, child care providers and school personnel should be aware of the food allergy and how to recognize the symptoms of a reaction.