

A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts as if a certain food is harmful. Your child may have a food allergy if you see these problems within 2 hours after your child eats a certain food:

- Your child's lips, tongue, mouth, or face swells up.
- Your child has hives or itching.
- Your child's throat is sore.
- Your child vomits or has stomach cramps or diarrhea.
- Your child's skin is itchy and red.
- Your child has a stuffy or runny nose.
- Your child coughs.
- Your child sneezes, sniffs, or clears his throat.

These foods cause most food allergies:

- Peanuts (and peanut butter) and tree nuts
- Eggs
- Cow's milk products
- Soybeans (and soy formula)
- Wheat
- Fish and shellfish (such as shrimp)

Only a few children have true food allergies. Most children outgrow it by the time they are 2 or 3 years old. Some allergies last a lifetime.

How can I take care of my child?

- Make sure your child does not eat the food that causes the allergy. This should keep your child free of problems.
- Give Benadryl 4 times a day if your child has just hives or itching. Do this until the hives are gone for 12 hours.
- Give your child any vitamins or minerals he or she might not get. For example, your child may not be able to have milk and cheese. Make sure your child gets calcium and vitamin D from other foods or pills.
- Epinephrine. If your child has a severe allergy, ask your doctor if your child needs shots of epinephrine.

Call 911 right away if your child:

- Wheezes.
- Has a cough that sounds like barking.
- Has a hard time when he breathes or swallows.
- Passes out.
- Feels tightness in the chest or throat.
- Has any other serious problem.

Call your child's doctor during office hours if:

- You have other questions or concerns.