

Introducing COMMON FOOD ALLERGENS



Understanding **FOOD ALLERGENS:**

- We understand that this process can feel overwhelming, but we're here to provide you with step-by-step instructions and empower you to confidently navigate this important stage of your child's development.
 - Cow's milk
 - Chicken egg
 - Peanut
 - Soy
 - Wheat
 - Tree nut
 - Shellfish
 - Fish
 - Sesame
- These are the nine major food allergens that make up the majority of food allergies. Cow's milk and chicken egg are the most common allergies for babies, and approximately 40% of children with a food allergy will be allergic to multiple foods. It's important to be aware of these allergens when introducing foods to your baby.

2 Options for **PREPARATION:**

- When introducing allergenic foods, you have two options: preparing the food yourself at home or using pre-made packets in dry powder form. Both options are equally valid, so choose what works best for your family's needs and preferences. Homemade preparations provide flexibility and control, while pre-made packets offer convenience and ease of use.

The "**EARLY & OFTEN**" Approach:

- Research has shown that introducing common food allergens early and frequently significantly reduces the risk of developing food allergies. The immune system needs exposure to these allergenic foods to learn that they are safe. By introducing very small portions of allergen foods, you are slowly exposing the immune system to these proteins and helping it adapt without triggering an immune response.

Getting **STARTED:**

- To begin the introduction phase, it's recommended to start between 4-6 months of age. Remember, these initial tastings are not meant to replace breastmilk or formula but rather to introduce your baby's body to potentially allergenic foods. Start with very small amounts, more like a taste or lick than a full serving of food. The goal is to offer these foods frequently, priming the immune system to recognize them as safe.

Signs of **READINESS:**

- Observe your baby for signs of readiness, such as being able to hold their head upright, sitting up with little support, tracking food with their eyes, showing coordination in getting their hands to their mouth, and swallowing food instead of pushing it out with their tongue.

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Allergenic FOOD INTRODUCTION Schedule:

- While there is flexibility in the order of introducing allergenic foods, here is a suggested schedule:
 - Peanut
 - Tree nut
 - Sesame
 - Wheat
 - Soy
 - Fish
 - Shellfish
 - Egg white (separate from the yolk initially)
 - Cow's milk (preferably in a fermented form, like yogurt)

Observe and NOTE REACTIONS:

- After each introduction, observe your baby for any reactions. Most reactions will occur within a few minutes, although they can occasionally take up to 2 hours. Remember, the most common reaction is no reaction at all. Anaphylaxis is relatively uncommon but it's important to be aware of the symptoms, so you can recognize them if they occur.

Safety Medicines and TESTING:

- Having an understanding of safety medicines is important in case of severe allergic responses. Benadryl (diphenhydramine) can be used as an antihistamine to diminish allergic reactions. EpiPen (epinephrine) is an auto-injectable dose used for severe allergic responses. Consult your pediatrician if you have a family history of food allergies and would feel safer with an EpiPen on board, since this is prescription only.
- In case you need it with a more severe reaction, use Children's Benadryl Liquid (12.5mg in 5ml) and dose using the following guidelines:
 - 11-16 lbs 2.5 ml (1/2 tsp)
 - 17-21 lbs. 3.75 ml (3/4 tsp)
 - 22-26 lbs 5 ml (1 tsp)
 - 27-32 lbs 6.25 ml (1 1/4 tsp)
 - 33-37 lbs 7.5 ml (1 1/2 tsp)

Continued Exposure and ALLERGEN COMBINATION:

- Once you begin introducing allergens, continue offering them frequently. Over time, you can start combining allergenic foods together and eventually include regular solid foods in your baby's diet.
- Introducing common food allergens is a new and important step in your baby's development. Remember, the goal is to teach the immune system to better distinguish between dangerous and safe substances. You are not alone in this journey, and we are here to support you every step of the way.