

MARTHA CURRIE WELLNESS

MARTHA CURRIE ELEMENTARY'S HEALTH & WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

Is it a food allergy or a food sensitivity?

Food, glorious, Food. Food is nourishing. Food is important for growth and food is often a centre point at family gatherings.

What happens when some foods cause more harm than good? This is what many families must figure out as they determine if their child has food allergies or food sensitivities.



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What is the difference?

A food allergy is an actual allergic reaction to a protein found in a food. The body's immune system is overwhelmed and symptoms come on immediately after the offending food is eaten.

A food sensitivity can occur hours or even days after the offending food is eaten. This type of delayed food reaction is harder to pinpoint because of the amount of time it takes for symptoms to appear after a food is ingested.

The following symptoms are likely to occur if someone in your family has a **food allergy or a food sensitivity**: As you can imagine, it can be difficult to figure out if you are dealing with a food allergy or a food sensitivity. The symptoms are often similar, and they do overlap at times.

- **Skin problems**
 - Hives (red spots that look like mosquito bites)
 - Itchy skin rashes (eczema, also called atopic dermatitis)
 - Swelling, redness
- **Breathing problems**
 - Sneezing
 - Wheezing, bronchitis
 - Throat tightness
 - asthma
- **Stomach symptoms**
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- **Circulation symptoms**
 - Pale skin
 - Light-headedness
 - Loss of consciousness
- **Whole body symptoms**
 - Fever, fatigue
 - Chills, sweating
 - Feeling weak
 - Weight gain
- **Brain symptoms**
 - Mood changes
 - Hyperactivity or ADHD
 - Depression
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Migraines
 - Anxiety
- **Muscle/Bone symptoms**
 - Joint pain
 - Muscle stiffness
 - Swelling
 - Poor exercise tolerance

Testing

The good news is that there are tests available to help you figure out if a food is causing your health concerns.

To check for food allergies (fairly rare), you can be referred to an allergist and they will perform a skin scratch test. The faster the hive outbreak occurs in response to the food tested, the more allergic you are to that food.

In this case, reactions may cause anaphylaxis and it will be important for that person to carry an epi-pen for accidental exposure to that food. Usually, the family will figure out these allergies on their own after the food is ingested and the immediate response requires medical care.

To test for food sensitivities, I use IgG testing for my patients. IgG testing tests the component of the immune system responsible for delayed food sensitivities.

It can be very difficult to pinpoint an IgG sensitivity without the test because it may be something that is consumed in a meal that is causing an issue.

For example, a person may have a sensitivity to garlic. If the garlic is eaten as part of a balanced meal, you wouldn't necessarily know if it was the garlic or the tomato affecting your symptoms.

What foods could be causing ADHD, allergies, abdominal pain, eczema etc etc?

The foods most likely to cause a food sensitivity are: dairy, wheat, egg, tree nuts, yeast, pork, soy and shellfish.

When I test for IgG sensitivities in my office, I check for 96 common foods. The main categories of foods tested are dairy, nuts and grains, fruit, vegetable, meat, egg, fish, yeast and sugar.

If a family member has a food sensitivity, what can I cook?

There are usually some simple food substitutions which can be used when cooking for someone with food allergies or food sensitivities. There are many websites which are useful to convert favorite recipes into non-allergenic recipes. You can substitute milk in a recipe with rice milk, almond milk (unless there is a tree nut allergy), coconut milk, hemp milk, quinoa milk or oat milk.

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