

Food Intolerance Often Mistaken for Allergies. Why the Difference Matters.

It's important to identify true allergies due to serious, life-threatening reactions

National Jewish Health

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CG: Kanao Otsu, MD National Jewish Health	<p>Otsu describes the specific antibodies that distinguish a food allergy: <i>“What makes it a food allergy is that these individuals have specific allergic antibodies called IGE that recognizes that particular food and triggers a certain cascade of characteristic reactions.” :15</i></p> <p>Otsu says a food intolerance is often mistaken for an allergy: <i>“Most people are unaware that the reactions that they’re having to food is an adverse reaction or an intolerance and not specifically a food allergy.” :20</i></p> <p>Otsu explains what to do if you suspect you have a food allergy: <i>“The first thing you would want to do is talk to your primary care physician or pediatrician. If they feel that your reaction is likely a food allergy, they will refer you to a specialist like myself.” :13</i></p> <p>Otsu says it's important to identify allergies because they can be serious: <i>“It’s important to distinguish between a food allergy and a food intolerance because, with a food allergy, you need or require immediate medical attention because some of the symptoms can be severe and, if untreated, can be fatal.” :19</i></p> <p>Otsu describes the conditions under which an epi pen should be used: <i>“Anaphylaxis is an allergic reaction that involves more than two organ systems, so if you’re having, you ate a peanut and you have hives and swelling plus shortness of breath, chest pains or wheezing, you’re going to want to use an epinephrine auto injector and go to the emergency department for further management.” :22</i></p> <p>Otsu lists the eight foods that cause 90 percent of allergic reactions: <i>“There are about eight foods that cause about 90 percent of all allergic reactions, and those are cow’s milk, egg, tree nuts, peanuts, fish, shellfish, wheat and soy.” :16</i></p> <p>Otsu says, with a true allergy, there is always a reaction to the food: <i>“With a food intolerance, some people can experience abdominal cramping two to three hours after eating. It may not always be consistent. Whereas, if you have a true food allergy, every time you encounter that specific food, you’re going to have some sort of an allergic reaction.” :20</i></p>
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