

# Food Allergies

# The Basics

- The role of the immune system is to protect the body from germs and disease
- A food allergy is an abnormal response by the immune system to a food protein
- When the food is eaten, the immune system thinks the food is harmful and releases histamine and other chemicals to “attack” the enemy

- There is no cure for food allergy
- Complete and strict avoidance of the food is the only way to prevent a reaction

# Anaphylaxis

# Common Food Allergens

Eight foods cause 90% of the allergic reactions in the Canada:

- Milk
  - Wheat
  - Peanuts
  - Tree Nuts (e.g. walnuts, pecans)
  - Fish
- Eggs
  - Soy
  - Shellfish

# Symptoms of Anaphylaxis

- **Skin system:** hives, swelling, itching, warmth, redness, rash
- **Respiratory system (breathing):** coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain/tightness, throat tightness, hoarse voice, nasal congestion or hay fever-like symptoms (runny itchy nose and watery eyes, sneezing), trouble swallowing
- **Gastrointestinal system (stomach):** nausea, pain/cramps, vomiting, diarrhea
- **Cardiovascular system (heart):** pale/blue colour, weak pulse, passing out, dizzy/lightheaded, shock
- **Other:** anxiety, feeling of “impending doom”, headache, uterine cramps, metallic taste

# Words a child may use to describe a reaction

- “This food’s too spicy.”
- “My tongue is hot [or burning].”
- “It feels like something’s poking my tongue.”
- “My tongue [or mouth] is tingling [or burning].”
- “My tongue [or mouth] itches.”
- “It [my tongue] feels like there is hair on it.” •

# Words a child may use to describe a reaction

- “My mouth feels funny.”
- “There’s something stuck in my throat.”
- “My tongue feels full [or heavy].”
- “My lips feel tight.”
- “It [my throat] feels thick.”
- “It feels like a bump is on the back of my tongue [throat].”

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# Epinephrine (adrenaline)

- Prompt administration of epinephrine is key to surviving anaphylaxis
- Prescribed as EpiPen®, or Twinject® auto-injectors



# Resources

- Allergic Living Magazine [www.allergicliving.com](http://www.allergicliving.com)
- Anaphylaxis Canada [www.anaphylaxis.ca](http://www.anaphylaxis.ca)
- The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network  
[www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)
- Allergy Safe Communities  
[www.allergysafecommunities.ca](http://www.allergysafecommunities.ca)