

EH&S Food Allergy Fact Sheet

Most Common Food Allergens

These 10 foods account for about 90% of all food-allergic reactions.

- Milk/Dairy
- Fish
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Sesame
- Egg
- Shellfish
- Soy
- Tree Nuts
- Corn (*per UMass*)

What is a food allergy?

A food allergy is when the immune system mistakenly attacks a food protein. Eating that food may trigger a sudden release of chemicals which then result in an allergic reaction. Food allergies can range from mild to severe symptoms; sometimes they can even cause death.

Symptoms of a Food Allergy

Mild Symptoms:

- Rash, Itching, or Hives
- Swelling
- Wheezing
- Abdominal pain or diarrhea
- Nausea or Vomiting
- Dizziness or fainting

Severe Symptoms:

- Trouble breathing
- Anaphylactic shock
- Loss of consciousness
- Rapid Pulse
- Death

Who is at risk?

Approximately 12 million Americans suffer from food allergies. Of those 12 million Americans, 6 to 8 percent are children.

Treating a Food Allergy

Awareness is the first step in treating a food allergy. However, despite your efforts to avoid those foods, you

may still come in contact with those foods that can cause an allergic reaction. Once diagnosed with an allergy, a doctor may prescribe an antihistamine for mild reactions, or epinephrine to carry with you in case of a more severe reaction.

Preventing an allergic reaction to food

Avoidance. The best way to prevent any type of allergic reaction to food is to avoid all direct contact with those foods or any equipment that has come in contact with those foods.

Never assume. Always read food labels carefully to make sure they do not contain an ingredient that could cause a reaction. Pay close attention to the list of ingredients and any warnings on the label.

Keep it simple. When dining out, it is most important to tell your waiter/waitress of your food allergy. Keep your meal simple so there won't be any surprise reactions to your food.

Eating out at a Restaurant

If you are dining out at a restaurant, you may want to make a card (adjust accordingly to your allergies/reactions) on your computer that states:

“I have a **life threatening food allergy to eggs** (egg products). Please inform me if any food I ordered contains any of these allergens? Cross contamination of utensils, gloves and equipment can cause me to have a **fatal reaction**. Thank you very much. Name (gives reference to chef/manager).”

Serving Food with Gloves:

All food service facilities and handlers on campus shall use non-latex gloves in order to prevent any possible allergic reactions to latex.

Preplanning and advocating your allergy issue is critical for a successful outcome when living with an allergy. Contact Dining Services Dietitian, Health Services, or Disability Services for further advice.