UNDERSTANDING FOOD ALLERGIES AND INTOLERANCES

INTRODUCTION

A food allergy develops when the immune system reacts to a typically safe meal, while food intolerance occurs when the body reacts chemically to a particular meal or drink.

Since the symptoms of food intolerance can occasionally mimic those of food allergy, food allergy and food intolerance are frequently mistaken. However, food intolerance does not affect immunity or result in life-threatening allergic responses (anaphylaxis). Additionally, allergy testing does not detect food intolerance, and non-evidence-based allergy tests are discouraged by the Australian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA).

Understanding food sensitivity can be challenging. Food ingredients occasionally can exacerbate the frequency and intensity of migraine headaches, rashes (like hives), or irritable bowel syndrome-related stomach distress.

1. FOOD ALLERGIES

Worldwide, the prevalence of allergies is rising, and food allergies are becoming increasingly widespread as well. The first year of life is when most allergies manifest. A common allergy in young children is to cow's milk. Most kids get over their allergy to cow's milk before entering school.

Among the most popular foods for allergies are:

- Eggs, shellfish such as prawns, crab, and lobster
- Peanuts, soybeans, peas, and chickpeas
- Tree nuts, including walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, cashews, pistachios, and Brazil nuts

Food allergy symptoms

The following are signs of a mild to moderate food allergy:

Symptoms that indicate an insect allergy are anaphylaxis, hives or welts, tingling in the mouth, vomiting, and swelling of the lips, face, or eyes.

Symptoms of a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis are breathing that is noisy or uncomfortable, tongue enlargement, throat tightness, wheezing, or continuous coughing, trouble speaking, raspy voice, persistent dizziness, or collapse pallid and clumsy (little kids)

An allergic reaction to food can affect many parts of the body, such as eyes, lips, and face swell, tongue swelling, tightness in the throat, stomach aches, vomiting - these are symptoms of an insect allergy anaphylaxis skin rashes, like urticaria or atopic dermatitis lungs - cough, wheezing, and asthma (which affects kids more often than adults).

Examinations for food allergies

A general practitioner may recommend testing from a specialist if they suspect you have a food allergy. You might have the following tests:

A skin-prick test, in which your skin is tested for potential allergies by applying a droplet containing the food to determine if it reacts, blood examinations, a specific diet in which you abstain from foods you may be allergic to to alleviate your symptoms.

To identify potential triggers for your symptoms, you might also be requested to maintain a diet and symptom diary.

How to treat a food allergy

If you have a food allergy, you cannot consume anything that you are allergic to, including foods to which you are allergic to any of the ingredients. Medication will be given to you to help control your symptoms or use in an emergency.

Among them are:

Antihistamines to treat moderate allergic responses.

Adrenaline auto-injectors are emergency medications for severe allergic responses like an EpiPen. You will receive an allergy management plan from your specialist, including instructions on handling your allergy. Even while immunotherapy can help children with peanut allergies grow less sensitive to peanuts, they should stay away.

Avoidance strategies

Actions you can do in the event of a food allergy

You can take specific actions to assist in managing your dietary allergy. Make sure the food on restaurant menus and food labels does not include the ingredients you are sensitive to. Inform

your family, friends, childcare, workplace, and school about your allergy. Always keep two adrenaline auto-injectors on hand in case you need them. Inform restaurant and café employees about your allergy Before your flight, disclose your allergy to the airline and cabin crew.Before dining, clean public surfaces.



2. FOOD INTOLERANCE

A food intolerance indicates that food is difficult for your digestive system to digest or break down. Food sensitivity is another term for intolerance to certain foods.

When a food is intolerable to you, it signifies that your digestive system is sensitive to it. Eating these meals may cause painful symptoms such as diarrhea, gas, and pain in the abdomen.

Common food intolerances

Common food sensitivities include:

Lactose intolerance occurs when an individual produces insufficient lactase enzyme to break down lactose, a sugar in milk and dairy products. It is the most prevalent type of food intolerance.

Histamine: Foods including cheese, pineapples, bananas, avocados, and chocolate naturally contain histamines. Histamines can also be found in some white and red wines. Histamine intolerance prevents the production of adequate diamine oxidase enzyme needed to break down this substance.

Gluten: Wheat, rye, and barley all contain the protein known as gluten. Being sensitive to gluten does not equate to having the autoimmune condition celiac disease. Gluten causes mild intestinal damage in those with celiac disease. If you are sensitive to gluten but do not have celiac disease, your body finds it more difficult to digest gluten.



Symptoms of food intolerances

Food intolerance symptoms include:

Abdomen ache, or the belly, a case of diarrhea, bloating and gas, migraines or headaches, regurgitation, nausea, upset stomach.

Diagnosis and testing for food intolerance

A breath test using hydrogen can identify lactose intolerance. You are given a lactosecontaining beverage to sip throughout the test. After that, for a few hours, you breathe into a balloon-shaped container every 30 minutes. The undigested lactose will result in elevated hydrogen levels in your breath if you are lactose intolerant. The lactose solution you drink may cause symptoms in you.

<u>Histamine intolerance and gluten sensitivity cannot be tested for</u>. An allergy test cannot identify food intolerances, whereas allergies can. Your doctor might advise you to maintain a food journal to monitor meals and symptoms. An elimination diet is another option to cut out specific foods for two to six weeks. If symptoms disappear throughout this period, they will reappear.

Management and treatment

You might have to adjust your diet to cut back on or stay away from problematic items. For many persons with food intolerances, eating modest amounts of food results in minimal, if any, discomfort. Over-the-counter medications such as antacids and antidiarrheals can be helpful when symptoms arise.

Lactose-intolerant individuals can drink lactose-free milk and dairy products. Drugstores also carry lactase enzymes for purchase. Add lactase drops straight to the milk or take lactase pills before consuming dairy products to break down the lactose in milk.

CONCLUSION

A food allergy develops when the immune system reacts to a typically safe meal, while food intolerance occurs when the body reacts chemically to a particular meal or drink. Differentiating between the symptoms of a food intolerance and an allergy can be challenging. Food allergies typically cause symptoms to appear shortly after ingestion. Food intolerance symptoms might appear instantly, but they can sometimes manifest in 12 to 24 hours.

Reactions to food intolerance are typically correlated with the quantity of food consumed. They might not show up until a person has consumed a threshold level of food, which varies depending on the individual. It's crucial to visit your doctor for a medical diagnostic because food allergies and intolerances might also have symptoms brought on by other disorders.

Technological and therapeutic advancements are bringing about a dramatic shift in the management of food allergies. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are helping to understand better and anticipate allergy patterns, while diagnostic breakthroughs and digital health solutions are improving individualized therapy.

Notwithstanding these advancements, problems remain in guaranteeing the security and effectiveness of novel therapies. The future looks bright as efforts are directed at improving these discoveries to make them available, secure, and valuable for people with food allergies and intolerances, with the ultimate goal of enhancing their quality of life.

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