

**Definition of food allerGy and food intolerance**

**FOOD ALLERGY**

A food allergy is an adverse reaction to food involving an immunological mechanism.

The clinical symptoms of food allergies range from mild discomfort to severe or life-threatening reactions (anaphylaxis), which require immediate medical intervention.

**Anaphylaxis**

Anaphylaxis is a **severe** and **sudden** allergic reaction which occurs when a person is exposed to an allergen to which they are sensitive. The causes of allergic reaction can include food such as nuts, seafood, eggs, wheat and other triggers, such as insect stings and drugs but, on rare occasions, there may be no obvious cause.

**Signs and Symptoms of Anaphylaxis**

The signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis **usually occur within the first 20 minutes** of exposure to an allergen, but in some cases reaction **can be delayed by up to two hours or more**. Rapid onset and development of potentially life-threatening clinical effects are characteristic of anaphylaxis. The following are typical signs and symptoms of allergic reactions:

**Mild to Moderate Allergic Reaction**

Signs and symptoms may include one or more of the following:

* Tingling of the mouth
* Hives, welts or body redness
* Flushing and/or swelling of the face, lips, eyes
* Anxiety
* Vomiting, abdominal pain (except in insect sting allergy where vomiting and/or abdominal pain indicate an anaphylactic reaction)

**Severe Allergic Reaction**

Signs and symptoms may include one or more of the following:

* Difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
* Difficult/noisy breathing
* Swelling of the tongue
* Swelling or tightness in the throat, difficulty swallowing
* Confusion
* Pale or floppy (young children)
* Shortness of breath, repetitive coughing or wheezing
* Chest tightness
* Faint, rapid, low blood pressure
* Loss of consciousness and/or collapse
* Vomiting, abdominal pain (for insect sting)

**FOOD INTOLERANCE**

Food intolerance refers to difficulty in digesting certain foods. It is important to note that food intolerance is different from food allergy. Food allergy triggers the immune system, while food intolerance does not. Foods most commonly associated with food intolerance include dairy products, grains that contain gluten, and foods that cause intestinal gas buildup, such as beans and cabbage.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FOOD ALLERGIES AND FOOD INTOLERANCE**

The symptoms of food intolerance occur usually a few hours after eating the food. Allergic reactions happen much more quickly. With an allergy, even a tiny amount of the food can cause an allergic reaction to take place. With food intolerances you need a lot more of the food to cause the symptoms.