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What is a food allergy?

Definition:

A food allergy is a condition in which the immune system incorrectly identifies a food protein as a threat and attempts to protect the body against it by releasing chemicals into the blood. The release of these chemicals results in the symptoms of an allergic reaction.

Symptoms:

An allergic reaction to food may begin with a tingling sensation, itching, or a metallic taste in the mouth. Other symptoms can include hives, a sensation of warmth, wheezing or other difficulty breathing, coughing, swelling of the mouth and throat area, vomiting, diarrhea, cramping, a drop in blood pressure, and loss of consciousness. These symptoms may begin anywhere from several minutes to days after eating an offending food, though life-threatening reactions generally develop within the first hour.



Triggers/Causes:

The following eight foods are responsible for 90% of all food-allergic reactions in the U.S.: milk, eggs, wheat, soy, peanuts, tree nuts (e.g., almonds, cashews, pecans, pistachios, walnuts), shellfish (e.g., shrimp, crab, lobster), and fish (e.g., tuna, salmon, catfish).

Tests/Diagnosis:

- Skin prick test, a 30 minute in office procedure
- Allergy blood test



Treatments:

There is presently no known cure for food allergy. Strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction. Epinephrine is available by prescription in a self-injectable device which is used in case of a severe allergic reaction.

Call South Bay Allergy and Asthma or go on to our website at southbayallergy.com to schedule an appointment.