



# AN INTRODUCTION TO FOOD ALLERGIES

by Fulden Tubb  
(MH Nurse, Allergy Mum and Coach)



# TODAY'S AGENDA

- What Are Food Allergies?
- Our Diagnosis Journey
- Life at home with allergies
- Allergies at School
- The Emotional Side
- Resources
- Q&A

# WHAT ARE FOOD ALLERGIES?

## Atopy March Atopy Triad

### Food Intolerance

Food intolerance does not involve the immune system and is generally less severe than food allergies. It is often caused by enzyme deficiencies, chemical sensitivities, or other digestive issues.

For example, lactose intolerance results from a deficiency in the enzyme lactase, which is needed to digest lactose in milk. Symptoms typically include bloating, gas, and diarrhoea and occur only after consuming large amounts of the problematic food.

### IgE-Mediated Food Allergy

IgE-mediated food allergies involve the **immune system** and are triggered by the production of **immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies** specific to a food allergen. Symptoms usually appear within minutes to a few hours after ingestion and can range from mild (e.g., hives, itching) to severe (e.g., anaphylaxis, a life-threatening reaction that can affect multiple organ systems).

### Non-IgE-Mediated Food Allergy

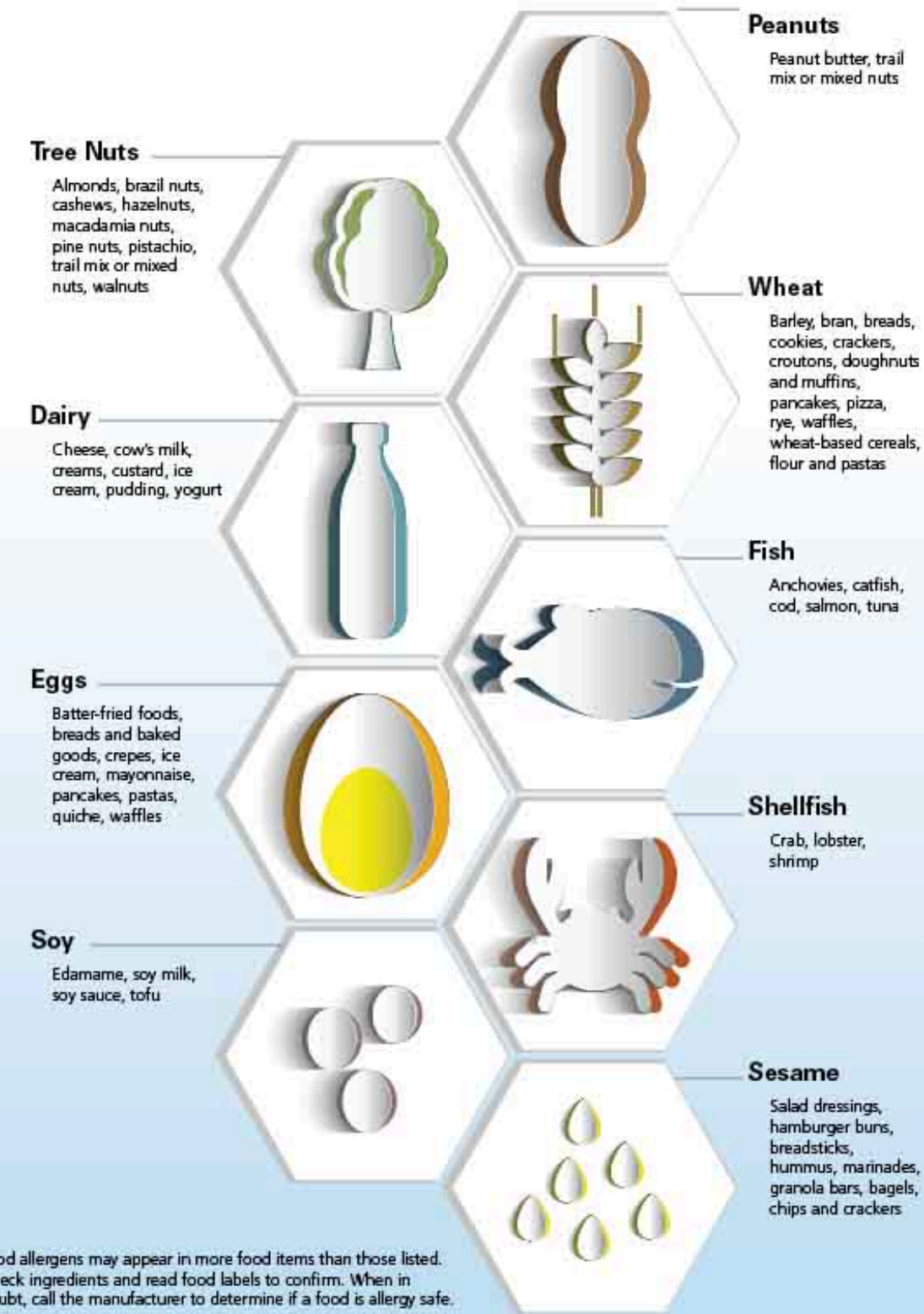
Non-IgE-mediated food allergies also involve the immune system but do not involve IgE antibodies. Instead, these reactions are typically delayed and mediated by other components of the immune system, such as T cells. Symptoms can appear hours to days after food ingestion and are often localized to the gastrointestinal tract, including abdominal pain, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

# TOP ALLERGENS



# Top 9 Food Allergens

(Account for 90% of all food allergy reactions in the United States)



\* Food allergens may appear in more food items than those listed. Check ingredients and read food labels to confirm. When in doubt, call the manufacturer to determine if a food is allergy safe.

**More than 170 foods have been reported to cause allergic reactions, including:**  
Apples, Avocados, Celery, Citrus, Corn, Garlic, Gelatin, Meat, Mustard, Poppy seeds, Spices, Sunflower seeds

# SYMPTOMS OF FOOD ALLERGIES

## MILD REACTION

- Itchy or runny nose, sneezing
- Itchy or tingling sensation in the mouth
- A few hives, mild itching of skin
- Mild nausea or discomfort

## SEVERE REACTION (inc anaphylaxis)

- Hives on the skin, sometimes on several parts of the body
- Shortness of breath, wheezing, repetitive cough
- Appears pale, faint, dizzy, confused
- Tightness in throat, hoarse, trouble breathing or swallowing
- Stomach discomfort such as abdominal cramps; diarrhoea, or vomiting
- Swelling of tongue, lips or throat
- Blood pressure changes
- Feeling of impending doom

# DIAGNOSIS

- your history of symptoms (inc reactions)
- physical exams
- allergy testing (SPT, blood test, oral food challenge)

You might be asked to keep a food diary or eliminate certain foods prior to diagnosis.

Our journey started with eczema, then food elimination (milk) → delayed reactions to milk → diagnosis but no adrenaline → immediate reaction, then pen prescribed → anaphylaxis

# MANAGEMENT

## **IgE-Mediated Food Allergy**

includes strict avoidance of the allergen and carrying an epinephrine auto-injector for emergency use.

## **Non-IgE-Mediated Food Allergy**

involves avoiding the trigger food and reintroducing it periodically to assess for resolution

# IMPACT OF ALLERGIES

## THE IMPACT OF ALLERGIES


Up to  
**3m**  
people in the  
UK affected

Up to  
**26m**  
people in  
Europe

Approx  
**33m**  
in the  
USA

**Over the last two decades** allergic diseases have become alarmingly common and are continuing to grow, affecting lives on an unprecedented scale. The statistics surrounding food allergies are a wake-up call :

**8%** Up to 8% of children and 6% of adults in the UK are affected.

→ In an average classroom, two children have a food allergy. 



**doubled**

Hospital admissions due to allergies and anaphylaxis have nearly doubled in the past 20 years.

**42%**

of parents of food-allergic children were found to meet the 'clinical cut-off' for post-traumatic stress symptoms

**20%**

of food allergy reactions happen at school.



Over 3 in 10 families report that their child's allergy affects their school attendance and education.

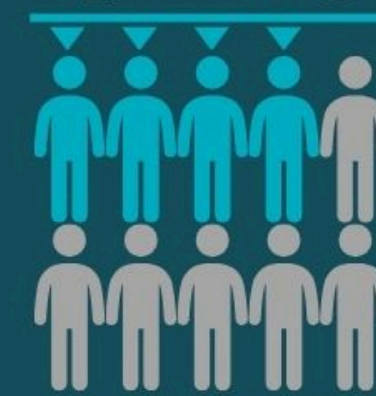
**1 in 3** children with food allergies report bullying. 

**£1,414**



The cost-of-living is impacting food allergic families, the extra costs a child faces every year is £1,414 (Adults £1,259)

**4 out of every 10**



parents experience moderate - extremely severe anxiety

While fatalities are thankfully rare, the profound impact on

**quality of life**

is undeniable.

 [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)

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**anaphylaxis UK**

A brighter future for people with serious allergies

# LIFE AT HOME WITH ALLERGIES

- MEAL PLANNING & LABEL CHECKING
- SAFE SNACK ROUTINES
- MEDICATION (ANTIHISTAMINES, INHALERS, AUTO-INJECTORS)

Mistakes do happen.  
Learn from them.



# ALLERGIES AT SCHOOL

**Mistakes do happen.  
Learn from them.**

Parents' Role is to build a team with the school by:

- Communicating with teachers
- Sharing Allergy Action Plans
- Making sure children feel included (use vegan spreads, dairy and nut-free milk/cheese/yogurt in activities)
- Advocating for your child (find resources to share with the school, problem-solve, educate staff and other parents)

Reference: Allergy UK (2024).

<https://www.allergyuk.org/resources/allergy-in-schools/>

School's Role:

Children and Families Act 2014 made it a legal duty for schools to make arrangements for pupils with medical conditions – this includes children with food allergies. All pupils with medical conditions – including food allergies – should have an Individual Healthcare Plan agreed between the parents and the school.

From 1 October 2017, the Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2017 allows schools to purchase their own supply of AAIs from a pharmaceutical supplier (such as a local pharmacy) without a prescription, if they wish to.

- Establish clear allergy policies (model policy can be found on Allergy UK website)
- Making sure children feel included in activities by using safe foods

Reference: <https://www.allergyuk.org/living-with-an-allergy/at-school/for-schools/>

## THE EMOTIONAL SIDE

- Anxiety and overwhelm for parents (Practise relaxation techniques e.g. deep breathing, five senses technique, taking yourself to a safe place in your mind and relaxing using a hobby or sport they enjoy.)
- Importance of peer support and mental health care (FB groups, Instagram accounts, meet up groups)
- Children feeling different or excluded - Teaching kids to advocate for themselves (reading list - Zoe's Big Day Out; I can't have that, I've got allergies; Izzy and Ollie adventure in an ambulance; Jacq has Celiac; The Magical cookie)



## PRACTICAL TIPS

- Involve your child in their allergy appointments
- Help them prepare for new challenges
- Make plans for eating out
- Create a written care plan together with your healthcare professional
- Invent role play games to practise communication (eg. teasing)
- Prepare for social occasions (safe snacks, meds)
- Support your child after a serious reaction (reassurance, listen and comfort, focus on the good, be a role model)
- Journalling



# RESOURCES

## Helping Ourselves & Each Other

- Podcasts:
  1. Anaphylaxis UK: Let's Talk about Allergies
  2. The Itch: Allergies, Asthma, Eczema & Immunology
- Websites: Allergy UK, Anaphylaxis UK

## Allergy Guides

<https://theallergymum.etsy.com>

## Allergy Mum Insta

<https://www.instagram.com/allergymum/>

## Allergy Mum Newsletter

<https://tfa23.share.hsforms.com/2lisykwFVTjSz-BL3SfO4MA>



# THANK YOU!

You're Not Alone!

Any questions??