

# Food Allergy and Intolerances

## What's the Difference?

- What is a food allergy? A food allergy results when the immune system decides that a **protein** in a food is harmful, and begins an attack when that food enters the body.
- The most common food allergies are: peanuts, tree nuts (almonds and walnuts), sesame seeds, milk, eggs, seafood, soy, wheat, and sulphites (a food additive).

# What are the symptoms of food allergies?

- Skin problems (hives; tissue swelling- especially of the face and around the mouth; itching and reddening of the skin; and eczema in young children).
- Breathing problems (stuffy, runny nose and itchy eyes; worsening of asthma in asthmatics)

# What are the symptoms of food allergies continued

- Digestion problems (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea).
- The most severe allergic response is anaphylaxis, which may involve all of the above symptoms and can be life threatening.

# How are you doing?

- **A food allergy happens when:**
  - A. Your body can't digest the food properly
  - B. You don't like a food
  - C. Your immune system decides it doesn't like the food and plans an attack on it!
  - D. A food smells bad

The correct answer is...

C

# How are you doing?

- **The most serious type of allergy is:**
  - A. Biohazard
  - B. Food attack
  - C. Anaphylaxis
  - D. allergicon

The correct answer is...

C

# What exactly is anaphylaxis?

- Anaphylaxis (*anna - fill -axis*) is a serious allergic reaction. It can be life-threatening.
- Anaphylactic shock is an explosive overreaction of the body's immune system to a triggering agent (allergen). It can be characterized by swelling, difficulty breathing, abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, circulatory collapse, coma and death.

# More about anaphylactic shock

- The victim may become uneasy, upset and red in the face. They may also develop a rapid heartbeat, prickling and itchiness in the skin, throbbing in the ears, sneezing, coughing and difficulty breathing. Shock may then follow, in which blood vessels become leaky, blood pressure falls and the person becomes cold, clammy and faint.
- **ALTHOUGH IT IS UNCOMMON, WITHOUT IMMEDIATE MEDICAL AID, DEATH MAY RESULT.**

# Who does it affect?

- Approximately 1-2 percent of Canadians live with the risk of an anaphylactic reaction.
- Although anaphylaxis is most often diagnosed in childhood, it can also develop later in life

# How are you doing?

- **Someone suffering from anaphylactic shock may:**
  - A. Become faint
  - B. Itchy
  - C. Sneeze
  - D. A and b only
  - E. B and c only
  - F. A, B, and C

The answer is...

F

# What is a food intolerance?

- Unlike a food allergy, a food intolerance **does not** involve the immune system.
- Many food intolerances are caused by inadequate digestion, absorption, and/or processing of the food when it is eaten. As a result, unwanted food materials may build up, having a harmful effect on an individual's body.

# What are the symptoms of food intolerance?

- The symptoms depend on the amount of the offending food eaten – the more you eat, the worse the symptoms tend to be.
- Symptoms only occur in the digestive system. Stomach aches, and sometimes diarrhea can start anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours after a person eats or drinks products containing lactose (sugar in milk).

# Lactose intolerance continued

- Lactose intolerance is an example of food intolerance (milk products).
- Soy milk and soy products are a good alternative for individuals who are lactose intolerant.