

**UNDERSTANDING FOOD ALLERGIES**  
*The Six Must-Know Medical Facts*

Food allergy occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks a food protein. Ingestion of the offending food may trigger the sudden release of chemicals, including histamine, resulting in symptoms of an allergic reaction. The symptoms may be mild (rashes, hives, itching, swelling, etc.) or severe (trouble breathing, wheezing, loss of consciousness, etc.). A food allergy can be potentially fatal. Scientists estimate that as many as 15 million Americans suffer from food allergies.

- A food allergy is an overreaction of the immune system in response to a food protein.
- Even a miniscule amount of food can trigger this overreaction and cause symptoms ranging from mild nausea or itching to anaphylaxis (a serious allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death).
- There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of the food is the only way to prevent a reaction.
- An allergic reaction can occur up to two hours (and very rarely up to four hours) after ingestion.
- The severity and progression of an allergic reaction is unpredictable.
- Anaphylactic reactions are treated by prompt administration of epinephrine. Time is of the essence and may mean the difference between life and death. Transport to an emergency room must follow. Repeat administration of epinephrine may be required if symptoms do not improve within 10 minutes.

*Did you know that Eight foods account for 90% of all food-allergic reactions? They are milk, egg, peanut, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat, and soy.*



**TESTIMONIALS**

*The Northeast Georgia Food Allergy Support Group has been an important resource for our family. Our five year old son has a severe peanut and tree nut allergy and preparing for Kindergarten was eased with the advice, materials, and educational opportunities provided by the Northeast Georgia Food Allergy Support Group. They provide guidance and empower families, schools and communities to make informed decisions regarding our children with food allergies.*

~Jennifer Fontenot, Ellijay, Georgia

*The Northeast Georgia Food Allergy Support Group has been a great example for our community. I am actively involved with my children with their after-school sports and distribute snacks & drinks to all children. This year, we had a child that had multiple food allergies that joined our football team. It was my passion to make sure I have him included in all activities that we do as a team. The Northeast Georgia Food Allergy Support Group has given me the knowledge and materials to make me confident that we do not leave a child behind because of their food allergies. I feel like they have made such an impact within our school systems and now the food allergy children are in a safe environment, all educators are fully trained and can recognize the signs of anaphylaxis if they were in a situation that arose.*

~Sarah Mickens, Copperhill, Tennessee

Know someone that has severe, potentially fatal food allergies?  
 Would you like to get together with other parents who are facing the same challenges that you are?

**JOIN US!!**

*We will face the challenges together!*

*Founded by*

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**Serving Fannin & Gilmer Counties**

*Find us on our social media sites:*

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**NORTHEAST GEORGIA FOOD ALLERGY SUPPORT GROUP**

*Committed to being an advocate and raising awareness in the local community by encouraging, educating and supporting families affected by food allergies.*

**THERE IS HOPE. THERE IS HELP.**

The Northeast Georgia Food Allergy Support Group is formally recognized by FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education) & FAAC (The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Connection Team), a trusted source of food allergy information in the United States. Jennifer & Sandy can help answer questions you may have about food allergies and anaphylaxis, and our website offers a variety of articles, tips and resources to help you manage food allergies and educate others. Additionally, each quarter, we will have support group meetings to provide food allergy education and a chance to network with other food allergy families.



## ANAPHYLAXIS

Anaphylaxis (pronounced ana-fill-axis) is a serious allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death.

Common causes of anaphylaxis include food, medication, insect stings, and latex. Food allergy is believed to be the leading cause of anaphylaxis outside the hospital setting. The CDC reported that food allergies result in over 300,000 ambulatory-care visits a year among children.

Less common causes include food-dependent exercise-induced anaphylaxis (occurs when a person eats a specific food and exercises within three to four hours after eating), and idiopathic anaphylaxis (anaphylaxis with no apparent cause).

### RECOGNIZE A REACTION

*Symptoms may include one or more of the following:*

**MOUTH** – Itching, tingling, or swelling of lips, tongue, mouth

**NOSE** – Hay fever-like symptoms: runny, itchy nose; sneezing; watery/red eyes

**SKIN** – Hives, itchy rash, swelling of the face or extremities, flushing

**GUT** – Nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea

**THROAT** – Hacking cough, tightening of throat, hoarseness, difficulty swallowing

**LUNG** – Shortness of breath, repetitive cough, wheezing

**HEART** – Weak pulse, low blood pressure, fainting, pale, blueness

**MENTAL** – Anxiety, “sense of impending doom”, lethargy



*A normal, happy face can quickly turn into a tingling, swollen, and itchy face – or worse. It's important to know the symptoms!*



Itching, tingling, swelling of lips, tongue and mouth, as well as hives, itchy rash, and flushing of the face are common symptoms of anaphylaxis, but some reactions are much more severe and can be potentially fatal.

In some reactions, the symptoms go away, only to return one to three hours later. This is called a “biphasic reaction.” Often these second-phase symptoms occur in the respiratory tract and may be more severe than the first-phase symptoms. Studies suggest that biphasic reactions occur in about 20% of anaphylactic reactions.

## TREATMENT

Strict avoidance of the allergy-causing food is the only way to avoid a reaction. Reading ingredient labels for all foods is the key to avoiding a reaction. If a product doesn't have a label, individuals with a food allergy should not eat that food. If you have any doubt whether a food is safe, call the manufacturer for more information. There is no cure for food allergies. Studies are inconclusive about whether food allergies can be prevented.

### HOW YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF

- Follow-up with your doctor or allergist if you've had a severe reaction.
- If you've been prescribed self-injectable epinephrine (i.e., EpiPen®, Auvi-Q® or Twinject®), carry it at all times.
- Educate others about your allergy. Teach them what you need to avoid, the symptoms of an allergic reaction, and how they can help during an allergic emergency.
- Teach yourself and others how to use an epinephrine auto-injector. Practice until it becomes second nature.
- Wear medical identification jewelry noting your allergy.



Epinephrine, also called adrenaline, is the medication of choice for controlling a severe reaction. It is available by prescription as a self-injectable device (EpiPen®, Auvi-Q® or Twinject®). EpiPen® (epinephrine) 0.3 mg and EpiPen Jr® (epinephrine) 0.15 mg Auto-Injectors are for the emergency treatment of life-threatening allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) caused by allergens, exercise, or unknown triggers; and for people who are at increased risk for these reactions. EpiPen and EpiPen Jr are intended for immediate self administration as emergency supportive therapy only. Seek immediate emergency medical treatment after use.

*Disclaimers: Northeast GA Food Allergy Support Group is a non profit, volunteer support group for individuals and families living with food allergies in nearby communities. The site is NOT intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always consult with an allergist or a family physician for individual diagnosis or treatment. Always check manufacturer's ingredient listings when purchasing product. Northeast GA Food Allergy Support Group and its contributors to this site will not be held responsible for any actions taken based on, or as a result of the reader's interpretation contained within.*



Jennifer Addington & Sandy Sosebee, founders of Northeast Georgia Food Allergy Support Group, represented our state on May 27th, 2014 at the State Capitol when Governor Nathan Deal signed the proclamation for Food Allergy Week in GA (May 11-17th, 2014)! Also joining our group was West Georgia Food Allergy Support Group founder, Jenna Bearden.



We also got a private tour with the Speaker of the Houses Director of House Communications, Kristie Lindstrom.

Governor Nathan Deal encourages all Georgians to recognize the value and importance of food allergy management & anaphylaxis prevention and awareness. Thank you again, Governor Deal!



Jennifer & Sandy goes into Fannin County Elementary Schools (Blue Ridge Elementary School, East Fannin Elementary School & West Fannin Elementary Schools) on Food Allergy Awareness Week every May to talk about food allergies! Northeast Georgia Food Allergy Support Group was thrilled to educate our children & educators during Food Allergy Awareness Week!



**VISIT OUR BOOTH  
AT THE FARE WALK  
ATLANTA, GA  
OCT 04, 2015**

*Help us take the next steps in making the world a safer place for those living with food allergies and finding a cure by supporting an event near you. Visit [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org) for more details.*