

# What?

A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. This leads to the development of immune memory against that food.

Although allergic reactions are often mild, some can be more serious, in the most serious cases can trigger a life-threatening reaction known as anaphylaxis.

Most children that have a food allergy will have experienced eczema during infancy. The worse the child's eczema and the earlier it started the higher the risk to having a food allergy.

Symptoms usually appear within a few minutes of eating the allergen but may take up to a couple of hours. Symptoms include:

- **Gut:** tummy pain, vomiting, diarrhoea
- **Skin:** itching and swelling, rash
- **Respiratory:** runny nose, sneezing, wheeze, cough

*For more information around allergies see our Allergy fact sheet.*



# Allergens

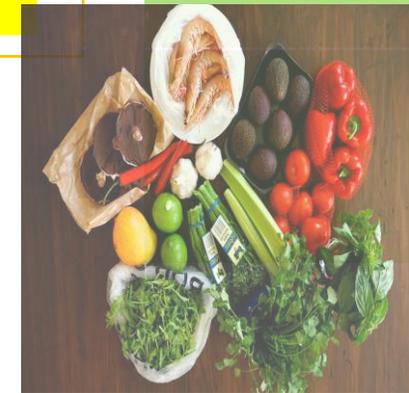
An allergy is the response of the body's immune system to normally harmless substances known as allergens.

## When?

<12months

There is no evidence to support delaying introducing allergens beyond six months. You can therefore introduce allergens as part of your complementary feeding and include as part of your family's diet Aim to have allergens introduced before 12months.

Introduce **one allergen** at a time for **three days**.





## TOP TIPS

### EGGS:

- You can mash eggs into other foods.
- Aim for x1 whole egg over the course of a week.

### PEANUT:

- **Never give whole or coarsely chopped nuts under 5 years.**
- **Mix 1 tsp peanut butter with 1 tsp warm water and mix in with yogurt, puree fruit, milk.**
- Aim for 2 level tsp per week.

Eggs should be introduced before Peanut.

Once introduced continue to give at least twice weekly.

Eczema should be well-controlled i.e. cleared prior to introducing allergenic

Delay introduction of allergens if your child is feeling unwell to avoid misinterpretation of symptoms.

*Introducing nuts before the age of one greatly reduces the risk of developing a nut allergy*

*Some foods eg strawberries, tomatoes and citrus fruits can irritate the skin and cause a red rash around the mouth after eating. THIS DOES NOT INDICATE AN ALLERGY*

**No evidence for maternal avoidance of foods for allergy prevention**

*Higher intake of fruits, vegetables and home-cooked foods are linked to a lower incidence of food allergy at 2 years*

## How?

When starting on your complementary feeding\* journey, incorporate foods associated with allergens in the introductory foods. This includes

- Eggs- *offer scrambled, omelette or hard boiled eggs.*
- Foods that contain peanuts and tree nuts- *Use smooth peanut butter, puffed peanut snacks, or grind whole peanuts to a fine powder.*
- Pasteurized dairy foods
- Fish/seafood
- Wheat

In babies at higher risk of food allergy, studies show that starting egg and peanut earlier (from 4months) can help prevent food allergy to these foods.

