

Food Challenges: What to expect and how to prepare

Food challenges are performed for several reasons. The most common reasons are if allergy tests indicate a child may be outgrowing a food allergy, or if allergy tests are inconclusive in the context of a history that is convincing for a food allergy.

Food challenges are performed in the office due to the risk of an allergic reaction occurring to the food. During the procedure the patient will be given the food in question to eat in progressively larger doses and observed in between doses for signs of an allergic reaction.

The time spent in the office for a food challenge may last up to 6 hours. So please bring any toys, books, videos to provide entertainment during that time frame.

Please remember to stop/have your child stop oral allergy medications such as Benadryl, Zyrtec, or Claritin 5 days prior to the test to avoid masking symptoms during the challenge.

DO NOT stop any asthma medications or topical eczema medications. It is important for lungs to be in optimum shape to help avoid a more severe reaction your child does develop an allergic reaction during the procedure. Also it is helpful to have the skin as clear as possible so that skin signs of an allergic reaction will be more easily identified.

Please bring in the food that is being challenged and a “non allergenic” food that can “hide” the food that is being challenged. Please bring in the food “plain” and we will do the mixing since we need to measure how much of the food a child is ingesting. The following are suggestions for common allergenic foods.

Cow’s Milk: plain cow’s milk (flavored also okay such as chocolate or strawberry, bring 16 oz. This can usually be easily mixed with apple sauce or **NON** cows milk based yogurt or ice cream.

Egg: bring in a total of 2 eggs i.e. 2 boiled eggs or 2 scrambled eggs or 2 pieces of French toast each with a measured 1 egg on each and maple syrup. Apple sauce and yogurt, soup/broth can also hide egg.

Wheat: cream of wheat (bring uncooked), box of whole wheat crackers, piece of whole wheat toast. Can be hidden in apple sauce, yogurt, jelly on wheat crackers.

Soy: plain soy milk (flavored also okay such as chocolate), bring 16 oz. This can usually be easily mixed with apple sauce, **NON** soy based yogurt or ice cream.

Peanuts and Tree Nuts & Seeds: peanut/nut/seed butters, peanut M&M's or chocolate covered almonds, or just plain peanuts or tree nuts if the child might eat them plain.

Please also bring your/your child's Epipen/Epipen Jr. and Benadryl with you to the appointment to have on hand in the unlikely event of a delayed allergic reaction after you have left the office following the food challenge.

QUICK CHECK LIST

- Stop antihistamines 5 days prior to appointment (call us if there is difficulty)
- Continue any needed asthma medications and topical eczema medication
- Light or no breakfast the morning of food challenge so child will be hungry and want to eat
- Bring food and an appealing non allergenic food
- Epipen/Epipen Jr. and Benadryl
- Comforting toys, books, videos etc