

Common Sense in

ALLERGY & ASTHMA

Food for Thought



More than 12 million Americans have food allergies, including one in 17 children under three. The most common causes of food allergy in the US are milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish and shellfish.

Food allergy can aggravate eczema, cause migraine or cause generalized immediate allergic reactions from mild to severe. People tend to have patterns; a similar level of occasional exposure is likely to provoke a similar reaction to past exposures. Frequent reactions tend to increase sensibility; every year without a reaction tends to reduce it.

Avoidance is the mainstay of treatment but may be difficult if you're highly sensitive. Food vapors get into the air during cooking and while foods remain hot (such as shellfish), and

dust can get in the air from shelling or eating roasted peanuts. A hamburger cooked on a grill that recently cooked a crab cake can pick up enough crab to provoke reactions in highly sensitive persons, as can anything fried in oil previously used to fry shrimp.

Almost all food allergy patients can learn avoidance measures that work almost all of the time. Emergency medicines are generally effective if used promptly and correctly. Desensitization may be possible in the future but it cannot be done in at this time.

Dr. Coifman is the only South Jersey allergist chosen to teach in each of the continuing medical education programs of the two national allergy scientific societies. He has served on national meeting faculty for six separate programs on allergy management, as well as programs on other topics in his specialty.

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