Food Allergies Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. A food allergy is a medical condition in which exposure to a food triggers a harmful immune response. The immune response, called an allergic reaction, occurs because the immune system attacks proteins in the food that are normally harmless. The proteins that trigger the reaction are called allergens.
2. The symptoms of an allergic reaction to food can range from mild (itchy mouth, a few hives) to severe (throat tightening, difficulty breathing).
3. Anaphylaxis is the most serious reaction to allergens there is. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening whole-body allergic reaction that can impair your breathing, cause a dramatic drop in your blood pressure, and affect your heart rate. Anaphylaxis requires immediate medical treatment, including an injection of epinephrine and a trip to a hospital emergency room. If it isn't treated properly, anaphylaxis can be fatal.
4. Food allergies are not to be confused with food intolerances which are unpleasant but not threatening.
5. More than 170 foods have been reported to cause allergic reactions.
6. Eight major food allergens – milk, egg, peanut, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish and crustacean shellfish – are responsible for most of the serious food allergy reactions in the United States.

STATS

Researchers estimate that 32 million Americans have food allergies, including 5.6 million children under age 18. That's one in 13 children, or roughly two in every classroom. Studies published in 2018 and 2019 estimate the number of

Americans of all ages who have convincing symptoms of allergy to specific foods:

- shellfish: 8.2 million
- milk: 6.1 million
- peanut: 6.1 million
- tree nuts: 3.9 million
- egg: 2.6 million
- fin fish: 2.6 million
- wheat: 2.4 million
- soy: 1.9 million
- sesame: 0.7 million

Food Allergies Are on the Rise

- The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reports that the prevalence of food allergy in children increased by 50 percent between 1997 and 2011.
- Between 1997 and 2008, the prevalence of peanut or tree nut allergy appears to have more than tripled in U.S. children.
- Food Allergy Reactions Are Serious and Can Be Life-Threatening.
- Every three minutes, a food allergy reaction sends someone to the emergency room.
- Each year in the U.S., 200,000 people require emergency medical care for allergic reactions to food.
- Childhood hospitalizations for food allergy tripled between the late 1990s and the mid-2000s.