

## Explaining Food Allergies to Parents

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Food allergies are quite common. In North America, more than 2 million children and an estimated 12 million adults are allergic to one food item or another. Many of the children we care for in our practices often suffer from mild to severe food sensitivities. Considering that one of the three causes of the vertebral subluxation may be chemical, the family wellness chiropractor may find it necessary to approach the role of nutrition in their practice.

### Explaining the Basics

Parents should be informed that food allergies occur when the immune system overreacts to a food the body has mistaken as harmful. When this happens, the body creates specific antibodies to fight what it has determined to be threatening. Once the increased amounts of histamines and other chemicals are released, it may further trigger a cascade of allergic symptoms that can affect the respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract, skin or cardiovascular system.

A typical immune system reaction occurs when the body creates immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies to the food. When these antibodies react with the food, histamine and other chemicals cause hives, asthma or other symptoms of an allergic reaction.

Although a child can develop an allergy to anything, eight foods account for 90 percent of all food-induced allergic reactions: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, cashews, etc.), seafood, shellfish, soy and wheat.

### What Is an Allergic Reaction?

Excess histamine in the body can cause a wide variety of noticeable symptoms: tingling sensation in the mouth, swelling of the tongue and throat, difficult breathing, hives, vomiting, abdominal cramps or diarrhea, drop in blood pressure, and in extreme cases, even death. There are also the less noticeable symptoms, such as irritability, fatigue, headache, nasal congestion, and skin discoloration. Symptoms from an allergic reaction may normally appear within minutes of a child ingesting the food to which they are allergic.

### The Biggest Culprit

"Got Milk?" This catchy phrase replaced what was once a popular media campaign: "Milk, it does a body good." It could be that the advertisers who came up with the "Got Milk?" campaign were concerned about truth in advertising. The harsh reality is that milk doesn't "do a body good." As a matter of fact, it's quite the opposite.

Dr. Robert Kradjian, chief of breast surgery at California's Seton Medical Center, has reviewed archives of medical and scientific journals and has found that milk is not the "perfect food" it is

reported to be. Dr. Kradjian found that many common childhood disorders were, if not induced, certainly aggravated by an increased intake of dairy products, including but not limited to allergies, ear and tonsil infections, bedwetting, asthma, intestinal bleeding, colic and childhood diabetes.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises parents not to give their children dairy milk before their first birthday. Dr. Frank Oski, former chief of pediatrics at Johns Hopkins University Hospital and the author of *Don't Drink Your Milk*, believes that milk should not ever be given to children. Since milk has been associated with iron-deficiency anemia, occult gastrointestinal bleeding and various manifestations of food allergies, he recommends milk not be consumed at all.

### Eggs, Soy and Wheat

The AAP released a report stating that children should be breastfed exclusively for the first 12 months of their life. Tell this to the mother who is getting up with her 4-month-old every two hours to nurse; and she'll tell you that her pediatrician said to supplement. Herein lays the biggest cause of food allergies in infants and toddlers.

A breastfed baby's routine will be to eat every two to three hours, which means the child will not sleep through the night. Since many parents want to get a good night's rest, the pediatrician may urge them to supplement by introducing baby cereal and formula into the baby's diet, which can lead to an early development of food allergies to wheat and soy. As the child grows older, these allergies can worsen and lead to further complications, such as asthma and respiratory difficulties.

### The Chiropractic Factor

Addressing nutrition with parents as a "lifestyle" to prevent food allergies can begin with the pregnant patient. Encouraging her to breastfeed exclusively and as long as possible (hopefully a year, if not longer), will increase the infant's chance against food sensitivities. For the young child to adolescent, having the parent or child fill out a food and drink journal may reveal a pattern of foods that literally are having a toxic effect on the body. By reviewing and providing recommendations, we need parents to see that this change is about "lifestyle" and its impact to improve the quality of life for their children.

Since food allergies are caused by the immune system interpreting that certain foods are a harmful substance, the role of chiropractic is very important in ensuring the immune system is functioning at its full potential. In my 25 years of practice, I have seen that when families participate in healthy lifestyle choices that includes wellness chiropractic care for their children, very few children manifest food allergies. The role of the family wellness chiropractor can be seen as facilitating a high quality of life in children and adults by improving whole-body function via the nervous system.

### Resources

1. Kradjian RM. "The Milk Letter: A Message to My Patients."
2. American Academy of Pediatrics Work Group on Breastfeeding. Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics*, 1997;100(6):1035-39.
3. Frank O. *Don't Drink Your Milk!: New Frightening Medical Facts About the World's Most Overrated Nutrient*. New Jersey: Simon & Schuster.
4. "Got Allergies and Mucus?" Available at: [www.milksucks.com/mucus.asp](http://www.milksucks.com/mucus.asp).
5. [www.nomilk.com](http://www.nomilk.com) - "The No Milk Page."
6. Wimmer B. "Debunking the Dairy Dogma: Studies Suggest That Milk Isn't the 'Health Kick' It's

Advertised to Be." ICPA, Nov-Dec 2003. Available at:  
[www.icpa4kids.org/research/articles/childhood/dairydogma.htm](http://www.icpa4kids.org/research/articles/childhood/dairydogma.htm).

JULY 2007

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