



# Healthy Eating Tip

## Food Allergy Awareness

Every year, up to 15 million Americans suffer from some form of food allergy. Since there is not even a cure for food allergies, besides avoiding the food allergen altogether, it has become a major food safety concern. Food allergies can be life-threatening and need to be recognized early on to prevent serious health problems.

### What is a Food Allergy?

A food allergy is a reaction caused by your body's immune system. Initially, your body mistakes a particular food as harmful causing an allergic reaction. An allergic reaction from a specific food can affect the skin, the gastrointestinal tract, the respiratory tract, and in serious cases, the cardiovascular system. Symptoms typically appear within a few minutes to several hours after eating the food depending on the severity of the reaction. If it is not treated right away, a food allergy can cause unconsciousness or even death.

### Common Food Allergens

There are over 170 foods that can cause your immune system to produce an adverse response. The following eight foods contribute to 90 percent of all food allergies:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Soy
- Wheat



From Corporate Fitness Works Registered Dietitian, Elaine Beville

# Healthy Eating Continued...

## Play It Safe

As mentioned before, food allergy symptoms can range from mild to severe. Although the initial reaction may only trigger mild symptoms, more severe symptoms may arise during another occurrence. Food allergies are unpredictable and need to be taken seriously. Below are tips to help manage your food allergies.

1. **Work with a Registered Dietitian.** A dietitian can clarify what foods and ingredients may be a potential problem, while still maintaining a healthy diet.
2. **Read Nutrition Labels Closely.** The Food and Drug Administration has mandated that if any of the eight major food allergens (*see previous page*) are in a product, the food manufacture must specify on the product label. Conversely, food manufactures can modify their recipes without notice, so be sure to read the ingredients closely for any changes.
3. **Inform Others.** To help prepare for a quick response, let your coworkers, friends, schools, and restaurant servers know about your food allergy.
4. **Be Your Own Advocate.** Call the food manufacturer if you have questions on specific ingredients. Also, review restaurant menus online before arriving or call ahead to ensure they can accommodate your needs. When eating at a restaurant, work function, or social event, ask questions on how the food was prepared and what ingredients were included.
5. **Always Be Prepared.** If you are severely allergic to specific foods, be sure to always have epinephrine readily available.

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## Sources:

<https://www.foodallergy.org>

<http://acaai.org>

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)