



Health Matters

Assistance Programme

If you are concerned about Food & Allergy then you should contact your GP. Advice is also available from HMAP on Freephone 0800 083 7545

Just some of the issues covered...

Stress & Anxiety

Bullying & Harassment

Performance at Work

Work-life Balance

Managing Pressure

Debt Counselling

Financial Matters

Legal Matters

Family Life & Relationships

Illness, Health & Wellbeing

Nutrition & Healthy Eating

Childcare & Parenting

Eldercare

Traumatic Incidents

Food and Allergy

Around one in five of the UK population claim to have a food allergy. But on testing, only 1% of adults are found to be truly food allergic - others may have food intolerance.

Allergies: Nuts, fruits (such as strawberry and citrus fruit), vegetables (such as celery, tomato, onion, garlic and parsley) fish and seafood are common allergens in adults. Allergic reactions to foods involve the immune system and are usually rapid, often appearing within minutes of eating, although in some cases they may be delayed for up to four hours later. Reactions may include:

- *Skin rashes, such as nettle rash or hives*
- *An itchy nose and eyes, sneezing or runny nose*
- *Asthmatic symptoms, such as wheezing, breathlessness and coughing*
- *Itching and swelling around the lips and mouth*
- *Nausea, cramping pains, bloating, vomiting and diarrhea*
- *Anaphylactic shock (rare).*

Diagnosis may involve a supervised elimination diet where foods are slowly reintroduced one at a time to identify the offending allergen. Once an allergy has been confirmed, the most effective preventative treatment is complete avoidance of the problem food.

Food intolerance: Many people experience symptoms such as headaches, aching muscles, joint pains and tiredness when they eat certain foods. Coeliac's disease and lactose intolerance are well known examples. Coeliac's disease is triggered by eating wheat, barley and rye-containing foods and is caused by a delayed immune reaction to gluten. This causes damage to the intestine membranes, leading to diarrhea, abdominal bloating and poor nutrient absorption, which can result in anaemia.

Intolerance to lactose (a sugar found in milk) causes some of the same symptoms as milk allergy, such as cramping pains in the stomach and diarrhea. As with an allergy, treatment involves eliminating the suspected food from the diet.

Other people may experience adverse reactions to food preservatives and additives, such as sulphites, benzoates, salicylates, monosodium glutamate, aspartame and tartrazine. Symptoms can be reduced or avoided by checking food labels and eating a diet rich in freshly prepared foods.

support when you need it
freephone: 0800 083 7545