

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

These are questions that have come up during the screening of this video.

Common Core Suggestions:

- Have groups of students work on a question and present their findings to the class.

Why do so many people have allergies?

The number of people with allergies has been growing rapidly in recent years. There are theories why this is happening, but at this time we are still unsure. This is one mystery scientists and doctors are trying to figure out.

How do you get allergies?

No one really knows why some people get food allergies and other people do not. We do know that food allergies run in families, and food allergies are related to genetics. Most people with food allergies develop allergies when they are babies or kids, but some people get food allergies for the first time when they are adults. Someone can begin to have an allergy at any time in life, which is one reason why it is important to tell your teacher when you do not feel well. Many people will never have allergies or food allergies.

How do you grow out of food allergies?

For some people with food allergies, the immune system eventually recognizes that foods are not dangerous and stops attacking them. People who outgrow their food allergies are then able to eat the foods without having a reaction. Allergies to certain foods are more likely to go away than others. For example, many babies and kids who are allergic to milk and eggs outgrow their allergies while they are still kids. On the other hand, many people who are allergic to peanuts never outgrow their allergies.

What is the difference between food allergy and lactose intolerance?

An allergy to milk and lactose intolerance are two different reasons why someone may not be able to drink milk.

People who have food allergy experience an abnormal reaction when they eat or drink the food they are allergic to, which could be milk and/or another food. The reaction occurs because the body's immune system mistakes the food for something that will make the person sick, and so it tries to eliminate it from the body. Some symptoms of this type of reaction include hives, rashes, swelling, difficulty breathing, and vomiting. The symptoms can be severe and sometimes dangerous.

Lactose intolerance happens when the body is unable to digest lactose, one of the main components of milk and dairy products. As the undigested lactose moves through the intestines, it may cause stomach pain or cramping, bloating, gas, and diarrhea. Lactose intolerance can be uncomfortable, but it is not dangerous.

How are environmental allergies different than food allergies?

People who have environmental allergies experience abnormal reactions to things in the environment, such as dust, trees, grass, and animals. Like food allergies, these reactions occur because the body's immune system mistakes harmless things in the environment for something that will make the person sick, and so it tries to fight against them. Some symptoms of this type of reaction include itching eyes, watery eyes, sneezing, runny nose, stuffy nose, and cough. Some people with environmental allergies

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may need to take medicines to help with the symptoms because the symptoms can make them uncomfortable. Unlike food allergies, though, environmental allergies are not dangerous.

How are medication allergies different than food allergies?

Medication allergies are just like food allergies, but they happen when people who are allergic to certain medications take those medications. The most common medications that people are allergic to are antibiotics, like penicillin and amoxicillin. Like food allergies, medication allergies can be severe.

How close to the food can someone allergic to it get without having a reaction?

People with food allergies have reactions when they eat or drink the food they are allergic to. They do not get a reaction just from being around the food or by breathing in the air around the food. However, people can get tiny amounts of food in their mouths without realizing it – for example, if they touch the hand of a friend who was recently eating the food and then touch their mouth. This is called *cross contact*. Even these tiny amounts can cause a reaction if someone has a food allergy. It's important for everyone to wash their hands AND wash any things that may have come into contact with food both before and after eating to prevent allergic reactions.

How long does it take for a reaction to occur?

Allergic reactions to food generally happen very quickly after a person with a food allergy eats or drinks the food – the symptoms can develop within minutes. Most reactions happen within two hours of eating or drinking the food.

What kind of treatments are there for food allergies?

There is no cure for food allergies, and no medications can prevent reactions. A medication used for allergic reactions, called *injectable epinephrine*, usually stops a reaction within minutes once it's started. If someone has a severe allergic reaction to a food, they may need more than one dose of injectable epinephrine to get better. The most important way to help a person with a food allergy is to help them avoid a reaction in the first place.

What do you do if there are no medicines or resources near you?

Get an adult or call 911 immediately. Stay with the person who is having a reaction and do your best to support them. If they are uncomfortable or dizzy, they may feel better if you help them lie down.