



**British Society for
Allergy & Clinical Immunology**

www.bsaci.org

Egg allergy (1 of 2)

Hens egg allergy is quite common in children under five. Egg allergy is often associated with eczema, and may make it worse, and is a risk factor for the development of asthma when older.

Children with egg allergy are frequently allergic to other foods. They are also at a higher risk of developing a peanut allergy and should avoid peanuts until it has been established that these are not going to be a problem.

The majority of children will outgrow their egg allergy, usually by the age of five.

Those who develop egg allergy in adult life are usually allergic to birds or feathers which contain an allergen which is similar to one found in egg yolk.

Symptoms

Commonly infants refuse the egg containing food, develop redness around the mouth and then vomit. Any or all allergic symptoms may occur in some individuals including:

- itching
- redness
- urticaria
- swollen face
- cough
- wheeze
- anaphylaxis

The symptoms of severe egg

allergy normally begin within seconds or minutes of ingestion, but always within the hour. Tiny amounts of egg may cause a reaction and extreme symptoms may include swelling of the airways, severe asthma or even – in rare cases – anaphylactic shock.

Some very sensitive people may even suffer breathing problems when they inhale the fumes of cooked eggs, and skin contact with egg may result in a rash.

Diagnosing egg allergy

The diagnosis of egg allergy is based on the history of previous reactions, and can be confirmed by blood tests or skin tests. All patients with egg allergy require an emergency plan, which may include an adrenaline autoinjector for those who are thought to be at risk of severe reactions.

Dietary management of egg allergy

Some egg-allergic children can eat well-cooked egg (in cake for example) but not raw or lightly cooked egg or even meringues – this suggests that they are outgrowing their egg allergy.

Others are allergic even to well-cooked egg: in these children egg allergy is more likely to be severe and may be lifelong.

Egg may be found in a wide range of foods, including:

- cakes
- pastries
- desserts
- meat products
- salad dressings
- glazes
- pasta
- battered/bread-crumbed foods
- ice cream
- chocolates
- sweets

This list is not exhaustive and food labels must be read carefully every time you shop.

Egg lecithin may be present occasionally in medications. Your pharmacist should be able to supply information about any medicines you are prescribed and the doctor needs to be told about your allergy if you are admitted to hospital.

Watch out for the word albumin, which also denotes the presence of egg. Lysozyme is an enzyme that may be derived from egg white. It may trigger symptoms in a small number of people with egg allergy.

Lists of egg-free foods can be obtained directly from many food manufacturers and supermarket chains. They are very helpful in the day-to-day management of the diet.



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In addition, the Leatherhead Food Intolerance Databank holds details about the ingredients of many foods. To access this information you need to see a State Registered Dietician.

Food labelling

Under new EU regulations even small amounts of egg must be declared in pre-packaged foods. Food companies are now compelled to label major allergens. However, all food products packaged before November 25, 2005, may remain in the shops until the end of their shelf life and so it is still important to check for the presence of egg and egg derivatives.

Eggs from other birds

People who react to chicken's eggs are advised to avoid eggs from duck, goose or quail because they contain similar proteins that can cause reactions. They may also need to be careful with undercooked chicken especially if eating chicken cooked on the bone. Some people may even react to well cooked chicken but this is very rare.

Vaccines

The MMR vaccine is normally cultured on cells from eggs. Although anaphylactic reactions to the MMR have been reported, these are very rare, and there is no evidence that people with egg allergy are any more likely to have a reaction to MMR than those who do not have egg allergy. Anyone who has active asthma or a history of anaphylaxis -even if this is not due to egg- should be advised to have the MMR administered in hospital, under supervision.

The Flu vaccine – Anyone who has ever been egg allergic is usually advised not to have the flu injection because of possible egg contamination. When flu injections are considered essential in egg-allergic patients, these must be given in hospital

The Yellow Fever vaccine is also grown on egg and can cause significant reactions, so it should not be given to egg allergic people unless there are exceptional circumstances and then in hospital under strict supervision.

Suggested reading

Baking Without Eggs and Stress by Julia McMaster.

Contains egg and dairy free recipes for cakes, pastries, flapjacks, biscuits and bread etc.

Send a cheque for £4.50 made out to Julia McMaster to 65 Sion Hill, Castlebar, Co Mayo, Ireland. This cost includes postage and packaging.

The Anaphylaxis Campaign is a national charity that can provide further information and support. Contact:

The Anaphylaxis Campaign
PO Box 275, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6SX

Helpline: 01252 542029

www.anaphylaxis.org.uk