

IgE-Mediated Food Allergy

FAST FACTS

6%

of children under age 5 years are affected by a food allergy

milk, egg and peanut are the most common causes of allergic reactions in children

peanut, tree nuts and seafood are the most common triggers for allergic reactions in teenagers and adults

WHEN TO REFER

A referral to an allergist is recommended for patients who:

- Present with concern for a food allergy
- Have a parent or sibling with a history of food allergy (families may wish to undergo allergist evaluation prior to starting allergenic foods)
- Have moderate to severe atopic dermatitis with concerns for possible food allergies

Please send any supporting medical records including PCP

IgE-mediated food allergy is an adverse health effect from a specific immune response that occurs reproducibly with exposure to a specific food. There are nine common food allergies: cow's milk, egg, tree nut, peanut, shellfish, wheat, soy, fish and sesame.

ASSESSMENT

Perform a standard health history and physical. Ask about episodes of possible food allergy reactions: Which food potentially triggered the symptoms? What symptoms did the patient experience? What treatment was required at home? Ask about parent or sibling history of food allergy and history of atopic dermatitis.

HPE (HISTORY AND PHYSICAL EXAM) RED FLAGS

Symptoms of IgE-mediated food allergy occur reproducibly with ingestion of a specific food, usually within minutes to an hour of ingestion of the causative food.

- Anaphylaxis
- Pale or blue skin
- Dizziness
- Faintness
- Shortness of breath
- Repetitive cough
- Tight or hoarse throat
- Trouble breathing or swallowing
- Wheezing
- Onset of hives
- Angioedema; swelling of lips
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Additional red flags:

- History of moderate to severe atopic dermatitis which is chronic.
- Parent or sibling history of food allergy

No physical exam finding alone is diagnostic of food allergy.

MANAGEMENT/TREATMENT

If there is concern for an allergic reaction to an ingested food, refer to an allergist for testing and management. Skin testing or serum food-specific IgE testing for potential food allergens are performed by the allergist if indicated.

If concerned about a potential IgE-mediated food allergy, consider prescribing weight-appropriate epinephrine auto-injectors concurrently with referral order. Instruct patient to strictly avoid the concerning food until the allergist evaluation.

Avoid screening or performing extensive food-specific IgE testing as these tests have a poor positive predictive value without a clear history and can lead to unnecessary elimination diets with impacts on quality of life and nutrition. If these tests are deemed necessary, they should be directed only towards relevant possible food allergens. It is also appropriate to refer to an allergist prior to any testing by PCP.

For more information or urgent needs, providers should contact Physician Priority Link® at 1-888-636-7997.

If you would like additional copies of this tool, or would like more information, please contact the Physician Outreach and Engagement team at Cincinnati Children's.

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Patient Presents

Standard Workup

- History of allergic reaction
- Family History
- Physical Exam

HPE (HISTORY AND PHYSICAL EXAM) RED FLAGS

Positive history of allergic reaction within minutes to an hour of exposure to a specific food.

- Anaphylaxis
- Pale or blue skin
- Dizziness
- Faintness
- Shortness of breath
- Repetitive cough
- Tight or hoarse throat
- Trouble breathing or swallowing
- Wheezing
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Additional red flags:

- History of moderate to severe atopic dermatitis which is chronic
- Parent or sibling history of food allergy

Yes

Any Red Flags?

No

Refer to allergist to identify risk for food allergy

- If concerned about a potential IgE-mediated food allergy, consider prescribing weight-appropriate epinephrine auto-injectors concurrently with referral order. Instruct patient to strictly avoid the concerning food until the allergist evaluation.
- Please send any supporting medical records including PCP clinical evaluation documentation.
- Skin testing or serum food-specific IgE testing for potential food allergens are performed by the allergist if indicated.

Perform focused HPE to evaluate non-food allergy cause and treatment

Urgent Referrals

Consider evaluation in the emergency department if patient presents to clinic with active symptoms of an IgE-mediated food allergy reaction including:

- Hypotension
- Onset of hives
- Repeated vomiting
- Respiratory distress
- Severe angioedema

Before sending to the ED, treat with medications including epinephrine, Benadryl and/or albuterol as appropriate.

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