

Food Allergies and Food Intolerances

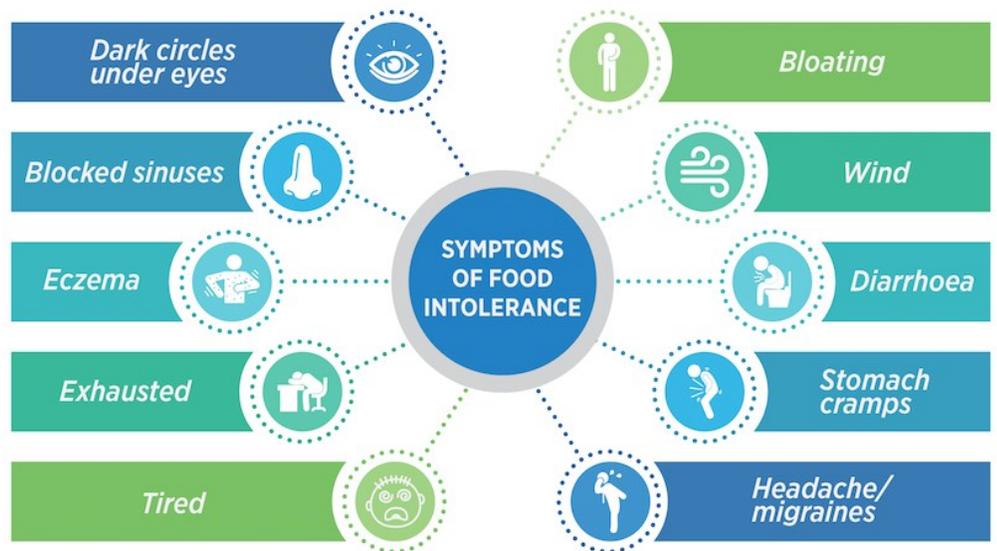
Food allergies affect about 1% of adults and 7% of children, and most children outgrow their allergies. Food intolerances are much more common but are often a less severe reaction to certain foods such as dairy products or specific foods or food ingredients.

A food allergy is an immune system response caused when the body mistakes an ingredient in food, usually a protein, as harmful and creates antibodies to fight it. An allergic reaction occurs when the antibodies are battling an "invading" food protein. Eight foods account for 90% of serious allergic reactions.



Some fruits and vegetables can cause an allergic response (Oral Allergy Syndrome) similar to a pollen allergy.

A food intolerance is a digestive system response that happens when something in the food irritates a person's digestive system or when a person is unable to properly digest, or break down, the food.



The difference between an allergy and intolerance to food is that food allergies may be triggered by small amounts of the food and it happens every time the food is eaten. Therefore, these foods must be avoided. Food intolerance reactions depend on the amount of the food eaten and a reaction may not occur unless a large amount of the food is eaten or it is eaten often in a short amount of time. Someone with a lactose intolerance may be able to drink a small amount of milk but more than that can cause a reaction. Food allergies and intolerances are different from food poisoning, which is often caused by spoiled or contaminated food, and would likely affect other people who have eaten that food.

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Symptoms of a food allergy can be mild to severe, and the amount of food needed to trigger a reaction is different from person to person. The allergy symptoms you have depend on where in the body the histamine is released. If it is released in the ears, nose and throat, you may have an itchy nose and mouth, or trouble breathing or swallowing. If histamine is released in the skin, you may develop hives or a rash. If histamine is released in the stomach or intestine, you will likely develop stomach pains, cramps or diarrhea. Many people experience a combination of symptoms as the food is eaten and digested.

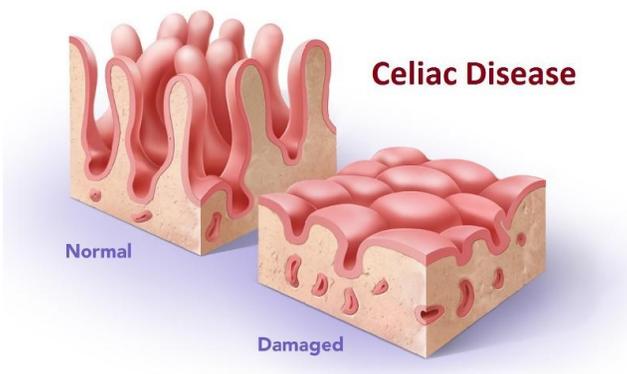
A more serious reaction is called Anaphylaxis. It is a potentially fatal allergic reaction that causes a sudden drop in blood pressure and fainting. Anaphylaxis requires immediate medical attention, including an injection of epinephrine, often done in the emergency room, unless the person has a shot with them to take. Anaphylaxis can be fatal if not treated quickly.

Lactose intolerance Lactose is the sugar in milk and other dairy products. It is the most common food intolerance effecting about 10% of Americans. With lactose intolerance the person lacks the chemicals, called enzymes, necessary to properly digest or breakdown the sugar in milk. This can cause gas, bloating, and diarrhea.

Other intolerances People may have an intolerance to food ingredients such as **dyes** and **monosodium glutamate** (MSG), a flavor enhancer. **Sulfites**, as in red wines, or a **food Preservative**, may cause problems in some people. **Salicylates** are a group of plant chemicals found naturally in many fruits, vegetables, nuts, coffee, juices, beer and wine. Aspirin also is a compound of the salicylate family. Foods containing salicylates may trigger symptoms in people who are sensitive to aspirin.

People with **Celiac Disease** have an inherited autoimmune disorder that affects the digestive process of the small intestine by causing serious intestinal tissue damage as you can see in the picture on the left. The damages effects the ability of the intestine to absorb nutrients, These people must avoid any amount of gluten, a protein found primarily in wheat, oat and barley products. Even a few crumbs can cause problems.

“**Non-celiac gluten sensitivity**” (also called “**gluten intolerance**”) can cause cramps or diarrhea. This type of “wheat allergy” causes the immune system to respond to a food protein similar to Celiac disease but does not cause lasting harm to the intestine as the Celiac response can.



Trail Mix is a perfect snack to eat on the go or at home. It does not require refrigeration. Be careful though, some trail mix recipes may not be healthy. When making a homemade trail mix, you are in control of the ingredients. Follow these 5 strategies to make a healthier trail mix.

- 1. Choose Whole Grains** with low amounts of sugar such as Wheat Chex, Cheerios, or air-popped popcorn.
- 2. Add Dried Fruit** to help get the recommended fruit in your day. A ¼ cup of dried fruit is equal to a half cup from the Fruit Group. Avoid products with added sugars like sugar or corn syrup.
- 3. Include Protein** to help provide satiety and appetite control like nuts and seeds like almonds, cashews, pumpkin seeds, or sunflower seeds. Get them unsalted.
- 4. Dash of Sweet** Including some sweetness is OK in moderation. Try dark chocolate that has at least 70% cocoa in order to receive the most health benefits without as much fat and sugar as other chocolates. Or include some candy coated chocolates.
- 5. Portion Control** Depending on your ingredients, calories can add up fast. Nuts and seeds have a lot of calories, but provide many nutrients and healthy fats. Candy has a lot of empty calories, which are calories from solid fats and/or added sugars that provide little or no nutrients. Snacks usually range from 100-200 calories. A 1/4 cup of trail mix will usually provide you with the right amount of calories and nutrients to make it a healthy snack.

Trail Mix Recipe

Makes 16 Servings

Ingredients:

- ✦ 2 Cups Whole Grain Cereal (like Quaker Oatmeal Squares)
- ✦ ½ Cup Dried Cranberries
- ✦ ¼ Cup Raisins
- ✦ ½ Cup Almonds
- ✦ ½ Cup Dark Chocolate Chips

Directions:

Add all ingredients in a large bowl. Stir to mix.
Pour 1/4 cup trail mix into a snack-size storage bag.



From University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator, Kayla Colgrove (8/2015)



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Consumer-centered access for long-term care information, referrals and assessments. For information, call 382-8481, #9, ext.304

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