



A food allergy is an immune system response to a food protein and results in the body having an allergic reaction.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction can include:

- swelling of lips, face, eyes
- hives or welts
- tingling mouth, abdominal pain, vomiting.

In some cases, a reaction can be severe and potentially life threatening. This is called **anaphylaxis**.

Symptoms of anaphylaxis can include:

- difficulty/noisy breathing
- swelling of tongue
- swelling/tightness in throat
- difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
- wheeze or persistent cough
- loss of consciousness and/or collapse
- becoming pale and floppy (young children).

Anaphylaxis is treated with an **adrenaline injection** which quickly constricts blood vessels, relaxes smooth muscles in the lungs to improve breathing, stimulates the heartbeat and helps to stop swelling around the face and lips.

If you appear to be reacting to foods, an experienced GP or specialist will take a detailed history of reactions, examine you and arrange for either skin prick tests or blood tests.



Peanuts and tree nuts

Are the most common culprits of severe allergic reactions; anaphylaxis. Tree nuts include cashews, almonds, brazil nuts, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans, pistachios and more.*

Fish or shellfish

Cause potentially serious reactions and symptoms may appear rapidly.

Soy

Often a trigger for mild allergy symptoms, such as eczema, and rarely causes anaphylaxis.

Milk

Occurs when the immune system reacts to the protein in milk.

Egg

One of the most common food allergens affecting young children. The majority of sufferers will outgrow their allergy by the time they reach 16 years of age.

Wheat

Children often outgrow wheat allergy by the age of two, and anaphylactic reactions are rare.

Seeds

Sesame, linseeds, sunflower and poppy seeds can occasionally cause allergic reactions.



*For a full list of tree nuts please visit the Allergy New Zealand website, www.allergy.org.nz

Source: Allergy New Zealand, a national not-for-profit society whose primary role is to provide information, education, and support to the many thousands of New Zealanders living with allergies, including those at risk of anaphylaxis. For more information phone 09 623 3912 or email allergy@allergy.org.nz.

The information given in this flyer is necessarily of a general nature and you should always seek specific medical advice for treatment appropriate to you. If you are a Southern Cross member, to find out what level of cover may apply for a particular condition featured in this flyer, please check your policy document or call 0800 800 181.