

## Food Reactions & Asthma

### This factfile covers:

- What is a food allergy?
- Which foods trigger allergic reactions?
- Which foods also affect asthma?
- How are food allergies diagnosed and treated?
- Where can I get more information?

Although unpleasant reactions to food are common, true food allergies are not.

Food and drink are not common triggers for people with asthma.

### What is a food allergy?

- An allergic reaction occurs when the body's immune system reacts abnormally to a harmless substance, such as food.
- Symptoms of food allergies can vary widely. You may get symptoms in your mouth (swelling or tingling), gut (vomiting, diarrhoea), skin (rash, swelling of face) or in your chest (wheezing, shortness of breath).
- Your asthma may flare up.

### Which foods trigger allergic reactions?

- Foods that can trigger asthma by way of an allergic reaction include peanuts, nuts, sesame, fish, shellfish, dairy products and eggs.
- Some people become wheezy when they eat food containing certain additives
  - The dye tartrazine (E102) is found in many foods and also in several medicines. People whose asthma is triggered by tartrazine may also react to aspirin.
  - The preservative benzoic acid (E210) found in fruit products and soft drinks can also be a trigger.
  - Some foods and wine contain histamine or similar chemicals called vasoactive amines that can trigger asthma.

### Which foods also affect asthma?

- Sodium metabisulphite (E220–227) may also trigger asthma, but not via an allergic reaction. It can be found in wine, home-brewed beer, fizzy drinks, prepared meats and prepared salads.

### How are food allergies diagnosed and treated?

- If you feel you or your child has a food allergy then you should contact your doctor. They may refer you to a specialist or an allergy clinic for testing.
- There is no reliable medicine for food allergies. The only treatment is avoiding the offending food.



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### Where can I get more information?

#### **Allergy UK**

3 White Oak Square  
London Road  
Swanley  
Kent BR8 7AG  
[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)  
[info@allergyuk.org](mailto:info@allergyuk.org)  
Allergy Helpline: 01322 619 898 (9am–5pm, Monday–Friday)

#### **BSACI**

17 Doughty Street  
London WC1N 2PL  
[www.bsaci.org](http://www.bsaci.org)  
[info@bsaci.org](mailto:info@bsaci.org)  
020 7404 0278

The British Society for Allergy & Immunology (BSACI) is a professional body that aims to improve the management of allergic and related diseases in the UK.

#### **The Anaphylaxis Campaign**

PO Box 275  
Farnborough  
Hampshire GU14 6SX  
[www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)  
[info@anaphylaxis.org.uk](mailto:info@anaphylaxis.org.uk)  
01252 542029  
Helpline: 01252 542 029

The Anaphylaxis Campaign is a national charity offering advice for people with anaphylaxis, a very severe allergic reaction that affects the whole body and must be treated with an immediate adrenaline injection.

#### **MedicAlert**

1 Bridge Wharf  
156 Caledonian Road  
London N1 9UU  
[www.medicalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalert.org.uk)  
[info@medicalert.org.uk](mailto:info@medicalert.org.uk)  
020 7833 3034  
Freephone: 0800 581 420

MedicAlert is a charity providing identification jewellery for individuals with hidden medical conditions and allergies.



### **Asthma UK Adviceline**

Ask an asthma  
nurse specialist

**0800 121 62 44**

**[asthma.org.uk/adviceline](http://asthma.org.uk/adviceline)**

### **Asthma UK website**

Read the latest independent  
advice and news on asthma

**[asthma.org.uk](http://asthma.org.uk)**

### **Asthma UK publications**

Request booklets, factfiles  
and other materials with  
independent, specialist  
information on every  
aspect of asthma

**0800 121 62 55**

**[info@asthma.org.uk](mailto:info@asthma.org.uk)**

### **Asthma UK membership**

Become a member of  
Asthma UK and receive  
*Asthma Magazine* four times  
a year

**0800 121 62 55**

**[membership@asthma.org.uk](mailto:membership@asthma.org.uk)**

Asthma UK, Summit House, 70 Wilson Street, London EC2A 2DB  
**T 020 7786 4900 F 020 7256 6075**

Asthma UK Cymru, Eastgate House, 35-43 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0AB  
**T 09202 430400 E [wales@asthma.org.uk](mailto:wales@asthma.org.uk)**

Asthma UK Northern Ireland, The Mount, 2 Woodstock Link, Belfast BT6 8DD  
**T 02890 669 736 F 02890 669 736 E [ni@asthma.org.uk](mailto:ni@asthma.org.uk)**

Asthma UK Scotland, 4 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JE  
**T 0131 226 2544 E [scotland@asthma.org.uk](mailto:scotland@asthma.org.uk)**