What to do if you suspect your child has reacted to a food?

If you suspect a contact reaction...

(please refer to our factsheet – 'What is a Contact Reaction' for more information about what a contact reaction is)

- Wipe away any food from the skin using a clean flannel.
- There is no need to remove the culprit food from your little one's diet. Try applying a barrier cream such as Vaseline around the mouth or on the hands before eating.
- Keep an eye on the redness or rash to ensure it is not spreading to other areas of the body.
- Contact your GP if you need reassurance that it is a contact reaction. Send or take a photo of the affected area if you have one.

If you suspect a food allergy...

(please refer to our factsheet – 'What is a Food Allergy' for more information about what a food allergy is)

Avoid the culprit food and speak to your GP for further advice.

It may be helpful to keep a record of the foods you have recently offered, symptoms experienced (what and when) – include pictures where appropriate. This can be useful to discuss with your GP or healthcare professional. For suspected allergies, a referral to an allergy specialist or paediatric dietitian for personalised guided support and testing is recommended.

IF AN IMMEDIATE (IGE-MEDIATED) FOOD ALLERGY is suspected, your GP, allergy specialist or paediatric dietitian should be able to organise allergy testing to confirm the diagnosis. This involves a skin prick test or IgE blood test. You should avoid the culprit food/s until your healthcare professional tells you otherwise.

Once the IgE allergy is confirmed by a healthcare professional you should receive an allergy action plan. Share a copy of this with your childcare provider/s and ensure this document is kept up to date.

IF A DELAYED (NON-IGE-MEDIATED) FOOD ALLERGY OR INTOLERANCE is suspected, your GP, allergy specialist or paediatric dietitian should be able to support you through an elimination/reintroduction diet whilst ensuring your child's nutrition and growth needs are met.

It is important not to self-diagnose or eliminate foods from the diet unnecessarily as this can lead to nutritional deficiencies and may affect growth.

Share a copy of your child's clinic letters or a referral letter from the GP and inform your childcare provider what foods must be avoided. Communicate regularly with your childcare provider to keep them up to date with any food allergies your child has outgrown.

E: hello@nurserykitchen.co.uk
W: nurserykitchen.co.uk
T: 01245 808080

This factsheet was created with input from Dr Penny Barnard. Penny is a registered dietitian with over 25 years' experience working as an NHS paediatric dietitian. She specialises in paediatric food allergy and gastroenterology.

This information is evidenced based and correct at the time of writing (March 2024). It is not intended to replace advice given to a child by a healthcare professional. Any concerns about a child's health should be discussed with a GP in the first instance without delay.