

Chapter 10

Food Allergies and Intolerances

What's In This Chapter?

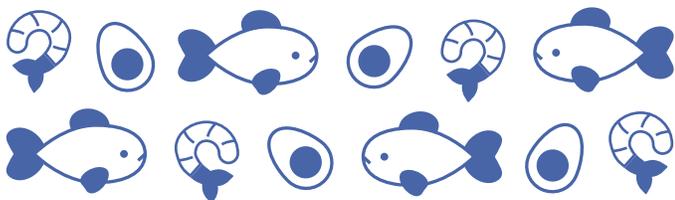
By the end of this chapter, child care providers will be able to:

- 1 Define “food allergy” and “food intolerance.”
- 2 Identify signs and symptoms that a baby is having an allergic reaction.
- 3 Use a tool to help gather information on a baby's food allergies and intolerances from the parents.



Handling food allergies and food intolerances in a child care setting can be a challenge. **Speaking to parents often about any food allergies or food intolerances their child may have, and steps to take if they have a reaction, is key to ensuring a safe feeding environment in your child care site.**

To help gather information on a baby's food allergies and intolerances from parents, you can use the “**For Parents: Is Your Baby Ready for Solid Foods?**” handout on **page 12**.

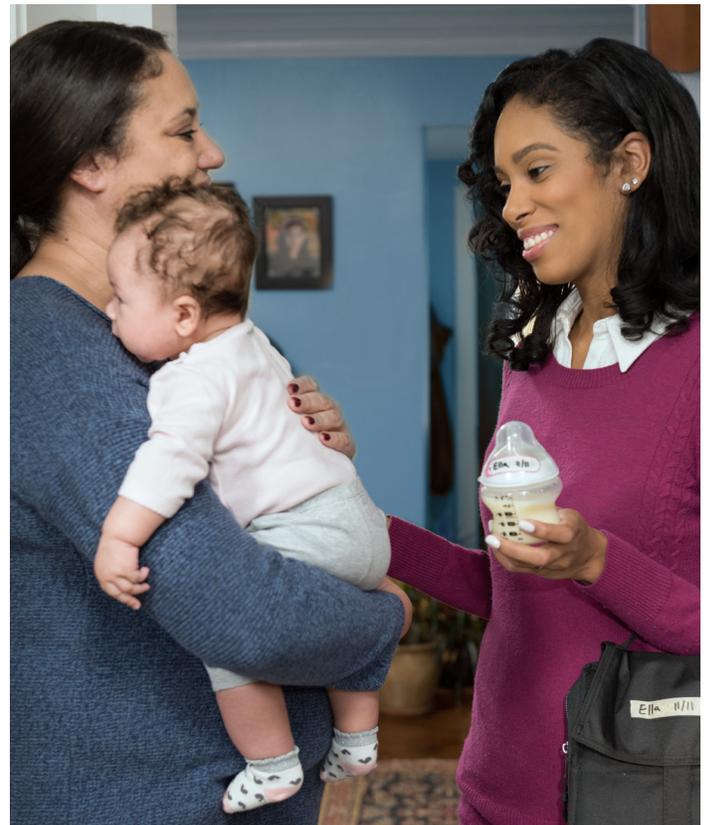


What Is a Food Allergy?

A **food allergy** is a body's reaction to a protein in a food called an allergen. Milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans are the most common allergens. These used to be thought of as foods that should be avoided when feeding babies. However, recent research shows that there is no need to delay the introduction of these foods.

What Is a Food Intolerance?

A **food intolerance** is a sensitivity to a certain food that makes it hard to digest. The most common intolerances are lactose and gluten. Lactose intolerance is the sensitivity to the sugar found in milk, called lactose, and foods made with milk. A gluten intolerance is the sensitivity to a protein called “gluten” that is part of wheat, barley, and rye.



Child care provider discussing food allergies and intolerances with parents.



Remember to always talk to parents before giving a baby solid foods.

Talk to Parents About Food Allergies and Intolerances

Food allergies and intolerances occur in 2 to 8 percent of babies and children.



Ask each parent for a list of foods, if any, that their baby has reactions to, or that should not be fed to the baby. Remember to always talk to

parents before giving a baby solid foods. Never serve a food that the baby has had a reaction to until the baby's parents say it's okay to serve.

Encourage parents to follow these steps to make it easier to identify a possible food allergy or intolerance:

- Introduce new foods gradually, one at a time, over the course of a few days.
- Introduce a small amount, such as 1 to 2 tablespoons, of a new food at first.
- Use **store-bought baby foods** that contain only one food item with few added ingredients or home-prepared baby food made with one **pureed** ingredient to see how the baby reacts to each new food.

See the **"For Parents: Is Your Baby Ready for Solid Foods?"** handout on **page 12** to help discuss a baby's food allergies and intolerances with parents.



Store-bought baby food that contains only one food item.

Signs of an Allergic Reaction

Observe closely for reactions when feeding a baby, especially when you start to serve solid foods. Watch for signs such as:

- diarrhea, vomiting, constipation
- stomach pain
- gas
- mouth sores
- coughing and wheezing
- congestion or stuffiness
- hives and skin rash
- a lot of fussiness
- more severe reactions, like shock or difficulty breathing



Did you know?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can happen quickly and may cause death. If a baby with a known food allergy is having a hard time breathing or stops breathing, give medication and call 911.

What To Do When a Baby Has a Reaction to a Food

It is recommended to have a written care plan developed by the parents and the baby's **health care provider** if the baby has a known food allergy or intolerance. The written care plan should include the steps you should follow if the baby has a reaction at meal or snack time.

Always watch a baby closely during and after a feeding. A reaction due to a food allergy or intolerance can happen within a few minutes or hours after the baby eats. When you are feeding a baby and you notice that he or she is showing signs of an allergic reaction, follow the steps in their written care plan.

If you see that the baby is having a very bad reaction and is having a hard time breathing, but does not have a written care plan, follow these steps:

1. Stop feeding the baby immediately.
2. Call 911.
3. Ask another adult nearby to call the baby's parents to let them know what is happening.
4. Stay with the baby even when the medical staff is at your **child care site** to help.

Preventing an Allergic Reaction

The best way to stop an allergic reaction from happening is to avoid giving the baby the food that causes the reaction. If the baby is having a very bad reaction follow the steps above.

In This Chapter

In this chapter, you have learned about the common food allergens and the steps to follow if a child in your care has an allergic reaction. In the next chapter, you will learn about caring for babies' teeth and gums.



Always talk to parents before giving a baby solid foods.



Encourage parents to introduce new foods gradually, one at a time, over a period of a few days.



A written care plan developed by the parents and the baby's health care provider can tell you what to do if the baby has a reaction to a food at meal or snack time.



If a baby is having a very bad reaction and is having a hard time breathing, but does not have a written care plan, you should:

1. Stop feeding the baby immediately.
2. Call 911.
3. Ask another adult nearby to call the baby's parents to let them know what is happening.
4. Stay with the baby even when the medical staff are at your child care site to help.

Check Your Knowledge

1. All of the following are true about food allergies, except:

- A** A food allergy is a body's reaction to a protein in a food called an allergen.
- B** A sensitivity to a certain food makes that food hard to digest.
- C** Milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans are the most common allergens.
- D** All of the above.

2. True or False?

If a baby is having a severe reaction to a food you just fed to him or her, and he or she does not have a written care plan, then you should stop feeding the baby immediately, call 911, ask another adult nearby to call his or her parents to let them know what is happening, and stay with the baby even after the medical staff arrives.

3. A baby is enrolling in your program or is starting solid foods, and you want to know if the baby has any food allergies and intolerances. To help guide the discussion with the parents on allergies and intolerances, you use which parent handout in **Chapter 1: Giving Babies a Healthy Start With the CACFP** to gather the information?

ANSWERS: 1. B. A food intolerance is a sensitivity to a certain food, making that food hard to digest. • 2. True • 3. "For Parents: Is Your Baby Ready for Solid Foods?" handout on page 12.