

# Egg allergy

Information and advice for parents & carers

## *Paediatric Nutrition & Dietetics*

Hen's egg allergy is common in children under the age of 12 months. The majority of children will have outgrown it by the age of 5.

### **How is an egg allergy diagnosed?**

To confirm your child has an egg allergy, their doctor/nurse may perform a skin prick test or blood tests (sIgE). For the skin prick test, a small amount of egg extract in a solution will be applied on your child's arm and their skin will be pricked, they may feel a slight scratch.

It is important to know that the size of the reaction on a skin prick test or the sIgE level of a blood test will show how likely a reaction will happen if your child is exposed to the egg; it does not show how severe the reaction will be.

### **What causes the allergy?**

It is still uncertain why people develop food allergies. An allergic reaction to food is caused when the body's immune system treats harmless proteins found in food as a threat to the body by mistake. It then releases chemicals such as histamine to prevent this threat, which it treats as an infection. These chemicals can cause a variety of symptoms of allergy.

Your child may have 'severe egg allergy' or a 'mild egg allergy'. As they get older they may move from 'severe egg allergy' to 'mild egg allergy' and they may even become non allergic and able to eat egg in the future.

### **Mild egg allergy**

If your child has a mild allergy, they may be able to eat well-cooked egg (in cake for example) but not raw, lightly cooked or meringues.

### **Severe egg allergy**

If your child has a severe egg allergy a reaction can occur even after eating tiny amounts of a well cooked product containing egg or even inhaling the fumes of an egg being cooked.

**Your child must avoid all traces of egg to manage this level of allergy.** We will give you further information on foods that should also be avoided.

## **What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction?**

### **Symptoms of a mild reaction**

Most children only have a mild to moderate reaction when exposed to egg. The following symptoms may look or feel serious but fall in the mild category:

- Urticaria (blotchy red rash, like nettle rash)
- Funny feeling/taste in the mouth
- Lip, eye or facial swelling
- Vomiting

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### **Symptoms of a severe reaction**

A severe allergic reaction is known as anaphylaxis. This is a very rare reaction that only the most sensitive of people are at risk of. Anaphylaxis symptoms include:

- Difficulty in breathing or asthma attack
- Throat tightening
- Tongue swelling
- Drowsiness

### **How is an allergic reaction treated?**

If your child has eaten food which contains egg, you should do one of the following:

#### **Mild reaction**

Give them an antihistamine tablet such as chlorphenamine (Piriton) or loratidine (Clarityn).

#### **Severe reaction**

Children considered at high risk of anaphylaxis are prescribed an Epipen to carry with them at all times as part of an overall care plan. This is an adrenaline auto-injector (similar to an injection). If your child is given an Epipen, we will show you how to use it.

If your child has an anaphylactic reaction, you must treat it promptly with an Epipen and then dial '999'. If you do not have an Epipen then dial 999 straight away. Tell them that your child is having an allergic reaction and the symptoms.

You will be given more detailed, written information about treating an allergic attack at your child's allergy clinic appointment.

### **What foods normally contain egg?**

The following foods may contain egg:

- Cakes
- Pastries
- Desserts
- Salad dressings eg. mayonnaise
- Glazes
- (Fresh) Pasta
- Battered/bread-crumbed food
- Ice cream
- Chocolates
- Sweets

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### **Please note this is not a complete list**

From an early age try to teach your child to always ask an adult before trying a new food.

### **Advice when:**

#### **Food shopping**

Many supermarkets and health food stores have a 'Free from' section which can be useful for finding egg-free products.

Always read food labels for egg even on foods eaten regularly. This is particularly important if the food item has had a change to the recipe. Your dietitian can help you with this if you are unsure how to read food labels.

#### **Eating out**

Always let the staff in restaurants and takeaways know that your child has an egg allergy and if they cannot reassure you that the food is egg free then choose an alternative dish or eat elsewhere.

#### **Vaccines**

The following information is about having the vaccines in general. They are not for treatment of an allergic reaction.

**MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine** - This can be given to your child as a routine procedure and has an excellent safety record. The measles part of the MMR is grown on chick cells but no egg protein has ever been found in the currently used vaccines.

**Flu vaccine** - This is not advisable for people with an egg allergy because there may be egg contamination in the vaccine. If essential, the flu vaccine should be given in hospital.

**Yellow Fever vaccine** - This vaccine is grown on egg and can cause significant reactions. It should not be given to people with an egg allergy unless in hospital under strict supervision and there are exceptional circumstances.

#### **Informing your child's school and/or carers**

Please ensure all carers are aware of your child's allergy and the treatment plan. Schools and day care nurseries will need to draw up a care plan for your child and staff will need to be trained in recognition and treatment of an allergic reaction. We will be arrange this for you. They will need to have antihistamines and/or an EpiPen kept at the school or nursery.

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### **Allergy notification bracelet/chain**

You may wish to consider purchasing a Medicalert bracelet or chain for your child which will carry information about his/her allergy. You can do this by contacting:

#### **Medicalert**

Freephone: 0800 581420

Website: [www.medicalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalert.org.uk)

Email: [info@medicalert.org.uk](mailto:info@medicalert.org.uk)

#### **Medi-Tag**

Tel: 0121 200 1616

Website: [www.medi-tag.co.uk](http://www.medi-tag.co.uk)

### **Contact Details**

Your doctor may or may offer a further clinic appointment on the assessment of your child. If your child has a serious reaction or develops asthma you should arrange for them to be referred to the allergy clinic for a review of their treatment plan.

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Further information**

For more information about allergies and the support available:

#### **Allergy UK**

[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

Helpline: 01322 619 898

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) and [www.swbhengage.com](http://www.swbhengage.com), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 'Food allergy in children and young people' (CG116) , February 2011
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 'Anaphylaxis: assessment to confirm an anaphylactic episode and the decision to refer after emergency treatment for a suspected anaphylactic episode' (CG134), December 2011

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5495 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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