Food allergies occur when an individual’s immune system identifies that something the person ate is harmful to their body and triggers a protective response (acai.org). It is estimated that approximately 5% of children and 4% of adults have food allergies according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with about 32 million people having food allergies in the United States to defend the body, the immune system produces IgE antibodies to that food which then trigger mast cells to release chemicals into the bloodstream. One of these chemicals is histamine and it acts on the eyes, nose, throat, lungs, skin, or gastrointestinal tract and causes symptoms of the allergic reaction (Mayoclinic).

Once the body has made antibodies against a certain food, those antibodies instantly recognize that food. Each subsequent time the person eats the food, the body releases histamine into the bloodstream again, creating allergy symptoms. In severe food allergies, reactions can happen even if the person touches or breathes in particles of the food.

Many people who think they are allergic to a food may actually be intolerant to it. Food intolerance does not involve the immune system but involves the gastrointestinal system because there is a problem with digesting a particular food. Sometimes symptoms can be delayed by four to six hours or even longer (Retrieved from https://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/allergies/food-allergies).

Unfortunately, there is an increase of children and people with food allergies. The eight most common food allergies that account for 90 percent of all food allergies include:

- Cow’s milk
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Soy
- Wheat
- Tree nuts (such as pecans, walnuts, almonds, and cashews, pistachios)
- Fish (e.g. Bass, flounder, cod).
- Shellfish (such as shrimp, crab, and lobster) (Retrieved from https://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/allergies/food-allergies).

Most children who are allergic to milk, eggs, wheat, or soy outgrow their allergies by the time they are 5 years old, however only about 20% of people with peanut allergy outgrow their allergy. Fish and shellfish allergies usually develop later in life, and most people tend to have them lifelong.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction may involve the skin, the gastrointestinal tract, the cardiovascular system and the respiratory system. They can manifest in one or more of the following symptoms (Mayoclinic):

- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Tight, hoarse throat; trouble swallowing
- Repetitive cough
- Weak pulse
- Hives
- Shock or circulatory collapse
- Swelling of the tongue
- Cyanosis or blue coloring of skin
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhea
- Feeling of impending doom

The most severe allergic reaction is anaphylaxis, which is a sudden, potentially life-threatening, allergic reaction, which affects the whole-body. In addition to the symptoms mentioned above, anaphylaxis can cause swelling of the airway, difficulty breathing, a drop in blood pressure, loss of consciousness, and, in some extreme cases, even death that can happen within minutes.

Because food allergy exposure can be severe, people who think they might be allergic to a certain food should be evaluated by a doctor as food allergy are the leading cause of anaphylaxis outside of the hospital. People might try to just avoid or not eat a particular food, but allergens can be hidden in the ingredients list or have another name. Without a doctor’s diagnosis or allergy testing, a person cannot know exactly what to avoid.

The most common kind of allergy test is a skin test. A doctor or nurse will scratch the skin on the forearm or back with a tiny amount of the extract that contains the allergen and then wait a few minutes to see if there’s a reaction. Doctors may also do other tests, including a blood test. Blood tests show if there are antibodies to a particular food in the person’s blood.

Please See page two for article conclusion and Resources/References:
If you’ve found out that you have a food allergy, your allergist will work with you to create a treatment plan that is tailored to your specific needs. You should also work together to develop a written food allergy emergency action plan to keep at school or daycare settings to help avoid a serious reaction — and to provide guidance to caretakers in case a child has an emergency reaction.

If your medical provider diagnoses you with severe allergies, they may prescribe a medication called epinephrine, which can be lifesaving if a person has anaphylaxis. It is important that the medicine enters a person’s bloodstream quickly. Epinephrine comes in an auto-injector (Adrenaclick, EpiPen) with the dosage already prepared prior to administration (https://www.foodallergy.org/life-with-food-allergies/epinephrine/epinephrine-options-and-training). Signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis include:

- Hoarseness
- Throat and mouth swelling
- Difficulty breathing
- Low blood pressure, shock, rapid pulse
- Any symptoms in two or more of the body systems above (skin, gastrointestinal, respiratory, and cardiovascular systems), such as hives, combined with abdominal pain, or tingling lips, with difficulty breathing.

If an epipen is administered, call 911 immediately afterward so an ambulance can take you to the hospital. Sometimes the medication can wear off and there can be a second wave of symptoms. Medical staff need to monitor people who have received an epipen for a severe allergy in case the person needs additional treatment. It is good practice to have two doses as another reaction can recur if the medication wears off.

Food allergies can be challenging to deal with, but having reputable sources of information and the opportunity to discuss the condition with others who share your concerns can be very helpful. The internet sites below can be referenced for additional information.

Resources/References:

- www.kidswithfoodallergies.org
- https://acaai.org/allergies/types/food-allergy
- https://www.foodallergy.org
- https://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/allergies/food-allergies

**September Events**

**FREEDOM 5K RUN**
Let Us Never Forget 9/11
EBERLE PARK
SEPTEMBER 11 • 7:30 A.M.

**INDOOR TRIATHLON**
Sept. 16-20

For more information, call 210.652.7263