



Allergies and Your Baby

An allergy is a potentially harmful reaction to substances that have no harmful effect on most people. These substances are called allergens. Allergens may be inhaled, swallowed, injected or contacted by the skin. The reason allergies occur is not completely understood, but inheritance does play a part.



Prenatal Allergy Precautions

Allergies are very often hereditary. Pay special attention to the allergies present in family members. There are steps you can take while you're pregnant to help prevent allergies in your baby.

- If there are specific food allergies in your family, avoid eating those foods during pregnancy.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and chocolate throughout your pregnancy.
- Talk with your doctor about avoiding allergen foods.
- If you're allergic to dairy products, you might need to avoid all dairy products during your pregnancy. Talk with your doctor about taking calcium supplements.
- Use nonperfumed toiletries and avoid harsh chemicals such as household cleansers.

Breast-Feeding and Allergies

Consider breast-feeding your baby for the first six months of his life if there's a family history of allergies. Children who are breast-fed develop fewer food allergies than those who aren't. While breast-feeding, avoid foods that members of your family are allergic to.

Common Food Allergies in Babies

- ✓ milk
- ✓ eggs
- ✓ fish
- ✓ wheat
- ✓ strawberries

What to Do

- When it comes time for your baby to eat solid foods, introduce one new food at a time. Wait four to five days in between introducing new foods.
- If a food causes a reaction, wait at least two weeks before trying the food again. If a reaction occurs again, wait at least six months before trying that food again.
- Avoid giving your baby the same foods every day once solids have been introduced.
- If a raw food causes a reaction, the cooked version may be OK.
- Foods from the same family should be watched carefully. For instance, if peas are a problem, then beans may be also. They both belong to the legume family.
- Children often outgrow food allergies by the time they're 6 years old.

Allergy Symptoms in Babies

- ✓ colic
- ✓ redness
- ✓ recurrent bronchitis
- ✓ diarrhea, vomiting
- ✓ skin problems: dry or cracked skin; rash which may be accompanied by scratching or rubbing; welts
- ✓ sweats
- ✓ recurrent croup
- ✓ feeding problems
- ✓ nasal congestion: may be accompanied by sneezing, sniffing, snorting or snuffing; appears to have frequent "colds"

IS IT A COLD OR AN ALLERGY?

Colds

- A cold causes thick green, gray or yellow mucus.
- Coughs usually produce mucus.
- Colds usually last seven to 10 days.
- A cold is a virus.

Allergies

- Nasal discharge is watery, thin and colorless.
- Coughs are usually dry.
- Symptoms can go on for weeks at a time.
- No fever.