Food Allergy Treatment

After getting advice from your health care provider, some mild allergic reactions may be treated at home. Any worsening of symptoms requires medical attention.

Self-Care at Home

- For localized hives or other mild skin reactions
- Take cool showers or apply cool compresses.
- Wear light clothing that doesn’t irritate your skin.
- Take it easy. Keep your activity level low.
- To relieve the itching, apply calamine lotion or take over-the-counter antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or the nonsedating antihistamine, loratadine (Claritin).
- For all other reactions, especially severe reactions, self-treatment is not recommended. Have a companion drive you to the hospital emergency department, or call 911. Here’s what you can do while waiting for the ambulance:
  - Try to stay calm.
  - If you can identify the cause of the reaction, prevent further exposure.
  - Take an antihistamine (1-2 tablets or capsules of diphenhydramine [Benadryl]) if you can swallow without difficulty.
  - If you are wheezing or having difficulty breathing, use an inhaled bronchodilator such as albuterol (Proventil) or epinephrine (Primatene Mist) if one is available. These inhaled medications dilate the airway.
  - If you are feeling light-headed or faint, lie down and raise your legs higher than your head to help blood flow to your brain.
- If you have been given an epinephrine kit, inject yourself as you have been instructed. The kit provides a premeasured dose of epinephrine, a prescription drug that rapidly reverses the most serious symptoms (see Follow-up).
- Bystanders should administer CPR to a person who becomes unconscious and stops breathing or does not have a pulse.
If at all possible, you or your companion should be prepared to tell medical personnel what medications you have taken that day, what you usually take, and your allergy history.

**Medical Treatment**

In a severe reaction, the first priority is to protect your airway (breathing) and your blood pressure. Your health care provider will make sure that your airway is open and that you are getting enough oxygen.

- Oxygen may be given through a tube into the nose or by face mask.
- In severe respiratory distress, mechanical ventilation may be required. A tube is placed in the mouth to keep the airway open.
- In rare cases, a simple surgery is performed to open an airway.

Your blood pressure will be checked frequently.

- An intravenous line may be started.
- This is used to give saline solution to help boost blood pressure.
- It also may be used to give medication.

You may need to be admitted to the hospital for further monitoring and treatment.

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- When to Seek Medical Care
- Exams and Tests
- Next Steps
- Prevention
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