



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Food Allergies

Food allergies can range from mild to serious, so it's important to understand your individual allergies so you can take control of symptoms and avoid an emergency. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Allergy	An immune response to an allergen, usually a protein, to which the body has become hypersensitive. The response can be mild and mostly affects only one body system (skin, respiratory, gastrointestinal, etc.).
Anaphylaxis	An acute allergic reaction that typically affects more than one body system. It can be life-threatening.
Food Intolerance	Reaction to certain food that is not the same as an allergy.
Urticaria (Hives)	Red, raised itchy areas on the skin that develop as part of an allergic response. Urticaria can be small or large and can last for variable periods of time.
Pruritis	A sensation of itchy skin.
Immunoglobulin E (IgE)	An antibody created by the immune system that is associated with allergic reactions.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your food allergy.

About Symptoms

- How can I tell if I'm experiencing an allergic reaction?
- How does a food intolerance look versus a food allergy?
- Which symptoms indicate an emergency?
- If those symptoms occur, what steps should I take?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Could this be something other than a food allergy, such as lactose intolerance or celiac disease?
- Could this be an indicator of another disease, such as an autoimmune disorder?

About Diagnosis

- How can we tell which foods specifically are causing the reactions?
- Which tests do you recommend?
- What does it mean if there is an elevated level of immunoglobulin E (IgE) in the bloodstream?
- What is a challenge test?
- What is a skin test?

About Treatment

- Are there any medications I should be taking?
- What medications can I take for mild reactions?
- Can I desensitize my immune system to allergens?

About Coping

- Will this get better over time?
- Are there any food allergies that I'm more likely to develop now?
- Should I be concerned about similar foods?

About Living With Food Allergies

- Do I need to carry an epinephrine pen?
- Should I be worried about trace ingredients in packaged foods?
