EGG ALLERGY

Introduction

Hens’ egg allergy is quite common in children under five. Egg allergy is often associated with eczema, and can make the eczema worse. Egg allergy is a risk factor for the development of asthma when older. Children with egg allergy are frequently allergic to other foods. Peanuts should be avoided until it has been established that these are not going to be a problem. The majority of children will outgrow their egg allergy, usually by the age of 5. It is rare for egg allergy to develop in adulthood. Those who develop egg allergy in adult life are usually allergic to birds or feathers which contain an allergen which is similar to one found in egg yolk.

Symptoms

Commonly infants refuse the food containing egg, develop redness and sometimes swelling around the mouth and then vomit. Any or all-allergic symptoms may occur in some individuals including itching, redness, urticaria, swollen face, cough, wheeze and even anaphylaxis.

More severe symptoms rarely occur but may include cough, wheeze and even anaphylaxis. The symptoms of egg allergy normally begin soon after skin contact or ingestion, and always within the hour.

Diagnosing egg allergy

The diagnosis of egg allergy is based on the history of previous reactions, and can be confirmed by blood tests or skin tests. All patients with egg allergy require an emergency plan, which may include an Epinephrine EpiPen for those who are thought to be at risk of severe reactions.
Dietary management of egg allergy

At first most children with egg allergy will need to avoid all food containing egg. However, some children can eat well-cooked egg (e.g. in cake) but not raw or lightly cooked egg e.g. fresh mayonnaise, raw cake mix. This suggests that they are outgrowing their egg allergy.

Egg may be found in a wide range of foods, including:

- Cakes
- Pastries
- Desserts
- Mayonnaise and salad cream
- Meat products
- Salad dressings
- Glazes
- Fresh pasta
- Battered and bread crumbed foods
- Ice cream
- Some chocolates and sweets

This list is not exhaustive and food labels must be read carefully every time you shop. Lists of egg-free foods can be obtained directly from many food manufacturers and supermarket chains. They are very helpful in the day-to-day management of the diet. State Registered Dieticians will be able to help with more detailed information if needed.

Food labelling

Under new EU regulations even small amounts of egg must be declared in pre-packaged foods. Food companies are now compelled to label major allergens.

Egg lecithin may occasionally be present in medications. Your pharmacist should be able to supply information about any medicines you are prescribed and the doctor needs to be told about your allergy if you are admitted to hospital.

Watch out for the word albumin, which also denotes the presence of egg. Lysozyme is an enzyme that may be derived from egg white. This is only of clinical concern in those who are extremely sensitive to egg.
The MMR Vaccine

All children with egg allergy should receive their normal childhood immunisations, including the measles, mumps and rubella vaccination (MMR) as routine procedure performed by their family doctor/nurse. MMR is not grown on hen’s egg, as is widely believed. Studies on a large number of egg allergic children show there is no increased risk of severe allergic reactions to the vaccine.

As with other vaccines, MMR should be postponed if children are unwell. Adrenalin/epinephrine should be readily available at the clinical site in all cases because breathing problems or collapse – although rare – can occur. If previous vaccination, (MMR or other) resulted in a severe allergic reaction (any breathing problems or collapse) then the child should be seen by an allergy specialist before further immunisations are given.

The Flu Vaccine

Anyone who has ever been egg allergic is usually advised not to have the flu injection because of possible egg contamination. When flu injections are considered essential in egg-allergic patients, these must be given in hospital.

The Yellow Fever Vaccine

Yellow fever vaccine is grown on egg and may cause allergic reactions, so it should not be given to egg allergic people unless there are exceptional circumstances and then in hospital under expert supervision.

Eggs from other birds

People who react to chicken’s eggs are advised to avoid eggs from duck, goose or quail because they contain similar proteins that can cause reactions. They may also need to be careful with undercooked chicken especially if eating chicken cooked on the bone. Some people may even react to well cooked chicken but this is very rare.
Suggested reading

Baking Without Eggs and Stress by Julia McMaster:
Contains egg and dairy free recipes for cakes, pastries, flapjacks, biscuits and bread etc. Send a cheque for £4.50 made out to Julia McMaster to 65 Sion Hill, Castlebar, Co Mayo, Ireland. This cost includes postage and packaging.

The Anaphylaxis Campaign
The Anaphylaxis Campaign is a national charity that can provide further information and support. Contact:

The Anaphylaxis Campaign
PO Box 275, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6SX
Helpline: 01252 542029
www.anaphylaxis.org.uk

The information contained in these pages has been provided by the British Society for Allergy & Clinical Immunology with special thanks to Dr Tina Dixon, Dr George De Toit and Paediatric Dietitian, Rachel De Boer.
Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format. Please contact: 01895 279973

Fadlan waydii haddii aad warbixintan ku rabto luqad ama hab kale. Fadlan la xidhiidh 01895 279 973

If you need this information in another language, large print or audio format, please contact 01895 279973.

Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem informacji pacjenta (patient information) pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973.

如果你需要這些資料的其他語言版本、大字体、或音頻格式，請致電01895 279 973查詢。

إذا كنت تود الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، بالأحرف الكبيرة أو بشكل شريط صوتي، يرجى الاتصال بالرقم التالي 01895279973.