
Egg Allergy

What is an egg allergy?

Egg allergy most often appears in a child when an egg is first eaten. It often goes away by 7 years of age. Some people are allergic to eggs all of their lives.

There are 2 types of protein in egg that a person can be allergic to:

- The most common allergic protein is destroyed when egg is cooked well. A person allergic to this protein can often eat food that has well-cooked egg in it.
- Cooking does not destroy the other allergic protein in egg. A person allergic to this protein needs to avoid eating eggs and products that have egg in them even if well cooked.

What are the signs of egg allergy?

A person can have a mild, moderate or severe reaction to egg. An allergic reaction begins right away but some may be delayed for up to 4 hours.

Mild or moderate: Some signs are: rash, hives, runny nose, itchy or watery eyes, coughing. Some people with this type of reaction can eat small amounts of well-cooked eggs. Your allergy doctor will tell you if you can eat foods like bread, cakes and cookies. Always avoid foods with more egg that is not well cooked or raw such as French toast, pancakes and mayonnaise.

Severe: Some signs are: coughing, choking, gagging, wheezing, trouble breathing, cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, swelling around mouth and rest of body. **This is called anaphylaxis and must be treated with an epinephrine auto-injector right away.** People with severe allergy must avoid all eggs and egg products. They should not have these in the house.

Learn to read labels

To avoid foods that contain eggs, learn to read labels. Follow these guidelines:

- Read the labels of packages well. **If the package does not list the ingredients, do not buy it.**
- Some words on a label that mean there is egg in the product are: egg, fresh eggs, powdered eggs, dried egg powder, yolk, albumen
- At home, in a restaurant or a bake shop, you need to ask the person who actually made the product or meal if there is egg in it. If they do not know or you are not sure they know, do not eat it.

Common foods that contain egg:

- Coffee which has been clarified by adding egg shells
- Home-made foaming drinks such as beer and root beer
- Foaming drinks in general
- Store bought candy is often brushed with egg white so it will shine
- Home made pies are often brushed with egg to bake golden brown
- Soups can be cleared with egg shells

Examples of things that may contain egg:

Baked goods: waffles, pancakes, egg bagels, French toast, doughnuts, muffins, angel food cake, sponge cake, cake, cake mixes, meringue, cookies, macaroons, Bavarian creams, bread, zwieback

Desserts: cream pie, custard pie, pumpkin pie, blancmange, ice cream, some sherbets and sorbets, boiled frosting

Other: noodles, pasta, candies, marshmallow, fondant, nougats, divinity, cream centres in chocolate and Easter eggs, Caesar salad dressing, mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce, tartar sauce, soup noodles, bouillon, broth, meat loaf, croquettes, batter or bread crumbs on fried chicken, fish or other meat

Some vaccines contain egg:

Some virus vaccines contain eggs. Examples are measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) as well as vaccines including H1N1.

Allergy to egg does not mean a child will be allergic to the immunization.

- If the person can eat egg, there is no reason to avoid vaccination.
- If the person cannot eat egg, he or she should be tested for allergy to the vaccine product before a vaccine is given.

Here are some ways you can replace eggs in cooking. You can experiment with these and find what works best for you.

- Egg replacer: You can get these at health food or grocery stores. Do not use egg substitute products such as 'Egg Beaters' as these contain egg.
- Substitute for an egg: Mix together: 2 tablespoons (30 ml) of flour, ½ teaspoon (2.5 ml) of shortening, ½ teaspoon (2.5 ml) baking powder and 2 tablespoons (30 ml) liquid
- Replace with ½ teaspoon (2.5 ml) to 1 teaspoon (5 ml) baking powder in some recipes.
- Replace with 1 teaspoon (5 ml) yeast plus ¼ cup (60 ml) warm water for some recipes.
- Some cake mixes do not need egg. Read the label and experiment.

Return to eating eggs:

Allergy to egg can be permanent. When you are free of allergy symptoms, talk to your doctor. Your doctor will advise you on the next steps to take.

- Some people can begin taking a very small amount of egg again in cooked food. If this does not cause symptoms, the amount of egg can be increased slowly over time.
- Other people cannot have any egg at all.
- Some people only react to uncooked egg as found in mayonnaise.

Return to eating eggs (continued):

Most people are more allergic to the egg white than the yolk as it contains more protein. Heating can destroy the allergic protein in the egg white. For this reason some people can eat hard-boiled egg or other food with cooked eggs and not get symptoms. This does not mean that the allergy is gone.

Before deciding if you are free of an egg allergy, you will need to watch closely for symptoms of allergy. Remember that symptoms can change and allergies can come and go. You should keep a record and talk to your doctor about it.

For more information:

You can contact the Asthma/Allergy Information Association (AAIA) in Toronto at 416-783-8944 for information and a brochure on egg allergy and cooking.

The website is: <http://aaia.ca/>

