



Food Allergy Awareness Week

25 April - 1 May

The number of people worldwide with food allergies appears to be increasing. Scientists aren't sure exactly why. Is it that allergies are being identified more or is there something in our food or environment that is causing the increase?

About 2- 4% of adults and 6-8% of children have food allergies, the most common are to cow's milk and egg, followed by soy, peanuts, tree nuts and wheat. The majority of children will lose their allergies by age three to five years. Allergies to peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shell fish are generally prolonged, which is why these four allergies are the most common amongst adolescents and adults.



There is a difference between a food allergy and food intolerance. Intolerances cause symptoms such as bloating, stomach cramps and aggravation of eczema or asthma and usually occur several hours or days after eating. Allergic reactions to foods usually occur quickly and symptoms can include hives, itching, swelling and vomiting as well as potentially life threatening anaphylaxis.

Coeliac disease is not an allergy or intolerance but an abnormal immune based reaction to gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley, oats and rye. It is life-long and treated by eliminating all gluten from the diet.

There are no proven treatments for food allergies so avoidance is the only way to protect against an allergic reaction. If you suspect that you have a food allergy or intolerance, talk to your GP who can refer you for further testing or to an allergy specialist. Self diagnosing a food allergy or intolerance can be risky as you may be cutting out important foods unnecessarily.

A Dietitian can help by giving advice to manage allergies and intolerances and to ensure that your diet is nutritionally complete.

If you would like help managing a food allergy or think you have a food intolerance, Therapy Professionals Ltd Dietitian is available to assist, just contact us on phone 377 5280 or email: therapy_professionals@clear.net.nz

For more information see:

allergy.org.nz

Coeliac.org.nz

Health Info Canterbury - allergies