

HEALTHY BOTTOM LINE

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Why are food allergies on the rise?



Hosting a party or a special event where food will be served has become a bit more complicated over the last several years, as hosts must now contend with food allergies when planning party menus.

According to Food Allergy Research and Education, a group that works on behalf of the millions of people who have food allergies, a food allergy is a medical condition in which exposure to a food triggers a harmful immune system response. Allergies can range from mild reactions to death. Life-threatening reactions can be initiated even by small traces of the trigger foods. In August 2018, a six-year-old girl in western Australia died as a result of a dairy allergy. In 2016, Natasha Ednan-Laperouse collapsed on a flight from London to Nice after eating a baguette in which sesame seeds were not listed on the food label.

Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that the prevalence of food allergies in children increased by 50 percent between 1997 and 2011, and it continues to rise. The CDC estimates that one in 13 children in the United States now has a food allergy. Food

allergies also affect roughly 7 percent of children in the United Kingdom and 9 percent of children in Australia.

While no one can answer why food allergy rates are increasing, researchers have been working hard to figure that out. A number of agencies, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, are looking into the "hygiene hypothesis." This is a link to western society's obsession with preventing and fighting germs. Researchers surmise that a lack of exposure to infectious agents early in childhood could create a situation in which a child's immune system mistakes a food protein as an invading germ, launching an attack. According to Dr. Leigh Vinocour of the American College of Emergency Physicians, being too clean may be leading to a rise in allergic reactions.

Another theory is that the overuse of antibiotics and acid-reducing medications could change the microbiome of the stomach and digestive system, potentially resulting in health-related problems like allergies. Some other health experts say that failure to introduce common food allergens to children early in life could set them up for a lifetime of food allergies later. Dr. Adam Fox, a consultant pediatric allergist at Guy's and St. Thomas' hospitals in Great Britain, suggests that if parents introduce something into a young child's diet, then the child is less likely to become allergic to it. For example, Dr. Fox cites a 2008 study of the prevalence of peanut allergies in Jewish children in the UK, where the advice had been to avoid peanuts, was 10 times higher than that of children in Israel, where babies are often given peanut snacks and peanut allergy rates are low.

Many other doctors believe food allergies are still a mystery. Dr. R. Sharon Chinthrajah of the Sean N. Parker Center for Allergy and Asthma Research at Stanford University believes the cause of allergies will ultimately come down to a combination of many factors. Environmental exposure and even what mothers ate during pregnancy could have implications. Until more is learned, people must remain careful of the foods they eat and serve.

The benefits of organic foods

Modern grocery stores are unlike the ones many of today's adults encountered when they were children. Grocery stores are not only bigger today than they were years ago, but they're also stocked with items that weren't available until relatively recently.

One stroll through the produce section reveals just how different modern grocery stores are from those of yesteryear. Organic fruits and vegetables now take up ample real estate in grocery store produce sections. Many shoppers may wonder if they're better off choosing organic versus traditional products, and research suggests they are.

- Organic foods contain less pesticides and toxic materials. A 2014 meta-analysis published in the British Journal of Nutrition found that organically grown crops were less likely than conventionally grown crops to contain detectable levels of pesticides. The analysis also found that organically grown crops were 48 percent less likely to contain cadmium than conventionally grown crops. Cadmium is a toxic heavy metal that can accumulate in the liver and kidneys, which the Global Healing Center says can affect blood pressure, induce bone damage and affect renal and dopaminergic systems in children.

- Organic crops contain more antioxidants than conventional crops. The same analysis also found that organic crops had significantly higher levels of antioxidants, which promote strong immune systems, than conventionally grown crops. Organic crops were found to contain 69 percent higher levels of flavanones and 51 percent higher levels of anthocyanins than their conventional counterparts. The extra antioxidants in organic foods is nothing to scoff at, as the National Cancer Institute notes that antioxidants neutralize free radicals, excess levels of which can potentially lead to the formation of various types of cancer and other diseases.

- Organic products cannot contain synthetic hormones. Conventionally raised animals are sometimes injected with synthetic growth hormones



so they will gain weight more quickly and produce more milk. Residue from those substances, which cannot be used in the production of organic meat and dairy products, is believed to contribute to widespread antibiotic resistance, according to the Bionodesign Center for Environmental Security at Arizona State University. In addition, some studies have suggested a strong connection between the hormones given to cattle and cancer in humans.

- Organic dairy products can promote cardiovascular health. A 2013 study from researchers affiliated with the Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources found that organic milk contained 25 percent less omega-6 fatty acids and 62 percent more omega-3 fatty acids than conventional milk. The Organic Center notes that's a considerable benefit, as higher amounts of omega-3 and lower amounts of omega-6 fatty acids helps promote cardiovascular health and support the immune system.

When choosing organic products at the grocery store, consumers may be benefitting their overall health in various ways.

The relationship between health and volunteering

Volunteering is often its own reward. Helping others can be just as beneficial to the people doing the helping as it is for the people being helped. Though it can sometimes be hard to find time to volunteer, a close look at some of the various health benefits of volunteering may compel adults and children alike to find the time they need to volunteer.

Volunteering and happiness

Veteran volunteers may have long suspected they're happier when they volunteer, and research suggests that's true. A study from researchers at the London School of Economics that was published in the journal Social Science and Medicine found that the more people volunteered, the happier they were. The researchers compared people who never volunteered to people who did, finding that the odds of being "very happy" rose by 7 percent among people who volunteered monthly. Those odds increased by 12 percent among people who volunteered every two to four weeks.

Volunteering and mental health

Psychologists have long known that social interaction can improve mental health. Psychology Today notes that interacting with others decreases feelings of depression while increasing feelings of well-being. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, exposing volunteers to people with shared interests. That can be especially valuable to people who are new to a community, helping them to avoid feelings of loneliness after moving to an area where they have no preexisting social network.

Volunteering and long-term health

Volunteering that requires social interaction can produce long-term health benefits that can have a profound impact on quality of life as men



and women age. A recent study published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease focused on participants without dementia who were involved in a highly interactive discussion group. Researchers compared those participants to others who participated in Tai Chi or walking or were part of a control group that did not receive any interventions. The former group exhibited improved cognitive function, and MRIs indicated they increased their brain volumes after being involved in the discussion group. Larger brain volume has been linked to a lower risk of dementia. Many volunteering opportunities require routine interaction with others, potentially providing significant, long-term health benefits as a result.

While volunteering is a selfless act, volunteers may be benefitting in ways that can improve their lives in both the short- and long-term.

DID YOU KNOW?

Families share many things in common. Genes, environment and lifestyles are just a few examples of the things families have in common, and the U.S. National Library Medicine notes that each of these factors can provide clues to medical conditions that may be hereditary. That only highlights the importance of knowing one's family medical history. A family medical history can help physicians identify people with higher risks of developing various disorders and diseases, including heart disease, stroke, certain cancers, and diabetes. In addition, sharing a family medical history with a physician can help people

learn about the ways they can reduce their risk for disorders and diseases their family members have dealt with in the past or are currently dealing with. Because while a family history may elevate a person's risk for certain diseases or disorders, that family history does not guarantee each person within the family will eventually be diagnosed with such ailments. And the earlier one learns and shares one's family history with a physician, the earlier one can adapt one's lifestyle to reduce one's risk of getting disorders and diseases one's family members have been diagnosed with in the past.

Create a Safe Sleep Environment for Baby

Did you know that the features of your baby's sleep area can affect his/her risk for **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)** and other sleep-related causes of infant death, such as suffocation?

Reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death by creating a safe sleep environment for your baby.

How can you make a **safe sleep environment**?

-  ▶ Always place baby **on his or her back** to sleep for all sleep times, including naps.
-  ▶ **Room share**—keep baby's sleep area in the **same room** next to your sleep area. Your baby should not sleep in an adult bed, on a couch, or on a chair alone, with you, or with anyone else.
-  ▶ Use a **firm sleep surface**, such as a mattress in a safety-approved* crib, bassinet, or portable play area, covered by a fitted sheet.
-  ▶ Keep soft objects, toys, pillows, crib bumpers, and loose bedding **out of your baby's sleep area**.
-  ▶ **Don't let baby get too hot during sleep.** Dress your baby in no more than one layer more of clothing than an adult would wear to be comfortable. A one-piece sleeper or wearable blanket can be used.

*Visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website for more information about safety-approved baby sleep areas: <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/Safety-Education-Centers/cribs/>



Learn more about ways to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death at

<http://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov>

<http://www.scotlandcounty.org/680/Safe-Sleep>



Health Department Now Offering Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives

Scotland County Health Department is pleased to announce we are now offering Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs) as a method of birth control. These contraceptives include Intrauterine devices (IUDs) and birth control implants. Examples include Mirena (IUD) and Nexplanon (Implant). LARCs are an effective way of preventing pregnancy for 3-5 years upon insertion, without the need to take a daily pill. "We are excited to be able to offer these methods of birth control to any new or current patient at Scotland County Health Department which will allow us to better serve the people in our community," stated Kristen Patterson, Health Director.

For more information about Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives, to determine eligibility, or to make an appointment, please call the Scotland County Health Department at 910-277-2440 or 910-277-2470 ext. 4466.

THIS AD WAS PROVIDED WITH TITLE X FUNDS.

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<http://www.scotlandcounty.org/148/Health-Department>



How you can benefit from having a pet



- Pets can help prevent loneliness. Loneliness affects people of all ages, but it is particularly problematic among seniors. Older adults who may be isolated can benefit from having a pet around. According to a study published in *Aging & Mental Health*, older adults who owned pets were 36 percent less likely to say they were lonely compared to those who didn't have an animal companion.
 - Pets can save lives. Pets can be trained to perform various tasks around the house and in the community. Rescue animals assist in finding people after natural disasters. Medical alert pets can help people with debilitating illnesses and assist physically impaired people with everyday tasks.
 - Pets help lower allergy risks. Keeping pets around can reduce a child's likelihood of developing allergies by as much as 33 percent, according to a study by pediatrician James E. Gern that was published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*. People exposed early on to animals tend to develop stronger immune systems overall.
 - Pets provide socialization opportunities. A pet can be the common denominator to strike up new friendships and connect with others. Whether walking around the neighborhood or being part of a pet obedience class or interest group, pets can help their owners expand their social circles.
 - Pets can help combat stress. Talking to or stroking a pet can make stress easier to handle. A study from researchers at the State University of New York at Buffalo found that, when conducting a stressful task, people experienced less stress when their pets were with them. Various other studies and data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found having a pet around can lower blood pressure, ease anxiety and may even help to lessen aches and pains. Pets provide unconditional love, which can be beneficial to someone facing depression or post traumatic stress disorder.
 - Pets help teach responsibility. Taking care of a pet can help children and adults become more responsible. According to the American Pet Product Association's 2011-2012 National Pet Owners Survey, 58 percent of pet owners say their pets help teach their kids to be responsible through routine care, exercise and feeding of the animal.
- Pets are more than mere companions. In fact, pets can offer numerous health and well-being benefits to people of all ages.

Pets have been kept for centuries. Statistics from various sources indicate North Americans own millions of dogs, cats, birds, small mammals, and reptiles.

Pets' affable nature and loving looks are enough for many people to welcome them into their homes, but the benefits of having a pet extends beyond their appearances and temperaments.



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Learn about Down syndrome to advocate for care

Having a child is an exciting experience full of anticipation. Thanks to modern medicine, expecting parents are able to learn much more about the little one they will welcome into the world while the fetus is in utero than their own parents could decades ago.

Modern medicine makes it possible to approximate a baby's length, weight, gender, and even if the child will be born with a head full of hair. Doctors also can utilize technology to look for genetic abnormalities, including Down syndrome, so parents can educate and prepare themselves for such situations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that Down syndrome occurs in approximately one in every 700 pregnancies. Many factors can elevate the risk for Down syndrome, including having already had a child with Down syndrome. Women older than age 35 are more likely to give birth to a child with Down syndrome than women younger than 35, making age one of the biggest risk factors.

Down syndrome also may be referred to as trisomy 21. That's because the syndrome occurs in most cases when there is a third copy — either complete or partial — of chromosome 21. Normally there are two copies of every chromosome. The Mayo Clinic says a third copy results from abnormal cell division while the fetus is developing. This extra genetic material causes the developmental changes and physical features of Down syndrome.

Down syndrome is the most common genetic chromosomal disorder and cause of learning disabilities in children. The Mayo Clinic also states that the disorder commonly causes other medical issues, including heart defects and gastrointestinal disorders.

Down syndrome cannot be prevented, advises the Cleveland Clinic. However, families can take steps to reduce the risk. Giving birth before the age of 35 can significantly reduce risk. The CDC says Down syndrome occurs in fewer than one in 1,000 pregnancies in which the mother gives birth before the age of 30. After the age of 40, this figure rises to about 12



in 1,000. Taking folic acid supplements before and during pregnancy also may help lower the likelihood that a baby is born with Down syndrome.

The outlook for babies born with Down syndrome is quite good. Many traits and conditions are manageable with treatment and therapies. The level of cognitive impairment is unique to each individual and may be mild to moderate. Other effects, such as obesity, sleep apnea and digestive problems, may be treated. With medical care, support from parents and family and education, many people with Down syndrome live very active and healthy lives. The life expectancy for babies born with Down syndrome is now 60 or older.

A variety of organizations provide support and information for parents of children with Down syndrome. These include the National Down Syndrome Society and the National Association for Down Syndrome. Contact these and other groups for more information.

DID YOU KNOW?

While most cases of Down syndrome, which is sometimes referred to as trisomy 21, are related to a third partial or complete copy of chromosome 21, Down syndrome can be caused by other genetic variations. Mosaic Down syndrome is a rare form in which a person only has some cells with an extra copy of chromosome 21, states the Mayo Clinic. Translocation Down syndrome, in which a portion of chromosome 21 becomes attached (translocated) onto another chromosome before or at conception, is another form of the syndrome. Children born with translocation

Down syndrome have extra genetic material attached to another chromosome from chromosome 21. There are no known behavioral or environmental factors that cause Down syndrome, which results from chromosomal abnormalities during cell division. Chromosome 21 is the smallest human autosome (non-sex-related chromosome), but it encodes approximately 225 genes. While most are not affected by an extra copy or extra genetic material, there are a few genes for which an extra copy creates an issue that results in Down syndrome.

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