

Egg Allergy and the Flu Vaccine



Flu season is here and so is the need to be protected by getting vaccinated. This vaccine contains a very small amount of egg protein, so before giving it health providers ask if you are allergic to eggs. But do you really know if you are allergic to egg? Could you have egg intolerance?

Food allergies affect millions of adults and children. On the flip side, many people think they are allergic and unnecessarily avoid certain products.

The big difference between a food intolerance and allergy is an allergy can cause a serious or even life-threatening reaction. This is why it is important to know if you have an allergy or intolerance to egg when you receive a flu vaccination. An allergist / immunologist has specialized training to properly diagnose your reaction to eggs or other foods.

Food intolerance happens in the digestive system and occurs when you are unable to properly break-down food. This could be due to enzyme deficiencies, sensitivity to food additives or reactions to naturally occurring chemicals in foods.

An allergic reaction involves the immune system. If you have an allergy to eggs, your immune system overreacts by producing antibodies called Immunoglobulin E (IgE). These antibodies travel to cells that release chemicals, causing an allergic reaction.

Studies show that even individuals with confirmed egg allergy can receive the flu vaccine with certain precautions.

If you or your child's reaction to eating eggs is hives only, the vaccine can be administered in the primary care provider's office with a 30 minute observation period afterward. If the reaction to eating eggs involves other symptoms such as difficulty breathing or lightheadedness, the vaccine should be administered in an allergist's office, again with a 30 minute observation period afterward.

DID YOU KNOW?

- There is a difference between having a food intolerance and a food allergy.

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To the Point

Studies show that flu vaccines can safely be administered to egg allergic individuals, either in the primary care provider's office or allergist's office depending on the severity of the allergic reaction to eating eggs.