



Do you know your trigger points?
Read **Food Allergies: Home Treatment** and get tips to stay safe.

WebMD.com

HEALTHY LIVING

Ground Control

LIFE WITH A CHILD WHO HAS FOOD ALLERGIES CAN SEEM DAUNTING, BUT KNOWING WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR CAN HELP YOU MANAGE

By Kerri-Ann Jennings

When you have a child with food allergies, it sometimes feels as though the very idea of milk, eggs, or peanuts is enough to make *you* break out in a rash. Those are the top three food allergens among children in the United States, followed by wheat, tree nuts, soy, fish, and shellfish. Together they make up the “Big 8” that account for 90% of all food allergies. Here’s what you need to consider as you navigate food choices.

Grocery Shopping

Shop the perimeter of the store for whole, unprocessed foods—that’s where you’ll find the basic ingredients for delicious, wholesome dishes for your family.

When buying packaged foods, always read labels. Food makers are required by law to tell you whether a product contains one of the “Big 8” allergens.

What about those labels that say the product was “processed in a facility that processes peanuts?” Your best bet is to avoid them, although you’re still probably safe if you stick to name-brand products made by the biggest food manufacturers, says Wesley Burks, MD, a leading pediatric allergist based at University of North Carolina. “Most of the national companies test the foods before they leave the plant,” Burks says.



Cooking at Home

Making your own meals is one of the best things you can do for everyone’s health—when you’re the one in the kitchen, you control everything that goes into a dish.

You can adapt many of your family’s favorite recipes by substituting certain ingredients: wheat-free pastas, non-dairy milk, or ground flaxseed in place of eggs when baking, for instance. Experiment with new recipes—lots of websites and cookbooks have great recipes that are allergen-free.

Eating Out

The two main things to remember when dining out are: Do your research, and speak up. Call the restaurant ahead of time to find out whether it can accommodate your child’s needs. The best time to call is usually between 2 and 4 p.m., when the chef will likely have more time to answer your questions.

Make sure your server is aware of your child’s allergens and is knowledgeable about what goes into each dish. Burks recommends becoming a repeat customer at restaurants. “Develop relationships with the chefs so you can be comfortable knowing they know what contamination is.”



EXPERT TIP

“Be sure to read the entire label of food products you’re considering buying, and read it every time you buy the product, as ingredients can change.”—*Wesley Burks, MD*

Reviewed by **Arefa Cassoobhoy, MD**
WebMD Medical Editor