

Food Symptom diary

In diagnosing allergic reactions, the details of what actually happened around the time you had an episode are essential as further allergic testing and management would be guided by your clinical history. Most of the time the history is clear and the diagnosis can almost be made on the story alone, with some tests carried out to confirm the diagnosis. In a true allergy you will have symptoms every time you eat a food; and no symptoms if you do not eat a food. Usually allergic symptoms will occur within 1 hour of eating the food.

However sometimes the history is not as clear-cut and this is complicated by the fact that there are conditions that look just like an allergic reaction but are not in fact due to allergy. In general broad allergy screening tests are unhelpful because like any other medical tests, there are results which are positive, where people do not really have an allergy (false positive).

To help pin-point possible triggers for your symptoms, a food symptom diary is very helpful as it can help us check for any common theme / food / medications involved in every episode.

We recommend that you do your symptom diary as soon as conveniently possible, while the facts and details of your episode are still fresh in your mind.

Write down

1. The general circumstances when you first realised your symptoms were coming on e.g. when, where and what you were doing
2. Tick the boxes on the symptoms list which match with yours
3. Every food & drink you had and medications taken *within 6 hours* prior to your symptoms
4. Mark anything new that you never had before
5. Mark any of the food / medications you can take subsequently after the episode with no problems as these are most likely not responsible for the episode
6. If you had been eating out, get the ingredients of your meals from the chef
7. Keep packaging from pre-prepared food for the ingredients list
8. Any snacks you might have had within the 6 hours prior to your symptoms
9. Any over-the-counter medicines you had taken within 6 hours prior to your symptoms e.g. aspirin, neurofen, herbal remedies
10. Any exercise or strenuous activity as this can contribute to your episode

Bring along your symptom diary to your next clinic visit.

