

# Baby (0–12 months)

The Food Allergy Stages handouts were designed to help families manage food allergies at different developmental stages.

- Use the *Food Allergy Basics for All Ages* handout to learn about important information all parents should know when they have a child with food allergies.
- Always speak with your child’s allergist if you have questions or before making changes to your child’s food allergy management plan.



**For very young children, parents and other caregivers are in charge of food allergy management. It is common for parents to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or worried at times when a child is first diagnosed with a food allergy. As you learn more about managing food allergies, you will feel more confident and will develop routines that help keep your child healthy and safe.**

### Allergen Exposure

- Young children put their hands and objects in their mouths. Allergens can get into the mouth this way. You can reduce the risk of an allergic reaction by:
  - Keeping food containing allergens out of reach (including siblings’ cups or bottles).
  - Washing your child’s hands with soap and water or wipes before and after eating.

### Recognizing and Treating an Allergic Reaction

- For young children, sudden changes in behavior can be signs of an allergic reaction. These can include crankiness, crying that can’t be soothed, tiredness or sleepiness beyond what is expected or routine, lack of interest in playing, or clinginess.

### Managing Food Allergies at Home

- Make sure that older siblings understand important rules, such as not sharing food and washing hands before and after they eat.
- Vacuum and clean floors regularly, as babies may find food on the ground.
- Consider buying allergen-free pet food and treats, as babies may put these in their mouths.
- Remember to keep epinephrine auto-injectors out of reach of young children.

### Eating Out at Restaurants

- Bring wipes to clean eating surfaces and high chairs/boosters to get rid of allergens.

## Managing Food Allergies at Childcare

- If the childcare will be providing some or all of your child's food, ask to read ingredient labels ahead of time and find out whether there are menu alternatives for your child.
- Make sure staff know how to read ingredient labels for your child's allergies.
- Make sure staff understand if your child needs a special formula.
- Provide a supply of ready-to-eat snacks for your child in case extra food is needed.
- Find out how staff monitor meals. Make sure your child cannot grab others children's food.
- Remind staff to wash their own hands after feeding children or eating their own meals.
- Be aware of allergens in some art projects, sensory tables, Play-Doh, and paint.



## Navigating Social Activities

- Make sure that other adults and children know they should not offer food to your child.
- Provide close supervision on playgrounds and other social settings where your child may grab food or well-meaning strangers may offer food.
- Carry wipes to clean surfaces and hand wipes if soap and water will not be available.
- Consider using a diaper bag to keep your child's epinephrine auto-injector, Anaphylaxis Action Plan, and wipes with you at all times.
- Watch out for objects such as sucking toys or surfaces that may have leftover food on them. Clean your child's mouth with water and their hands with wipes or soap and water if you think they touched a surface with an allergen on it.

## Preparing for Medical Visits

- Even young children will take cues from parents on how to react in new or stressful situations. When you are positive and calm, this provides comfort to your child.
- Use distraction or soothing strategies (e.g., rattle toy, singing to the child, sucking on a pacifier) to help with visits or procedures.
- Bring toys and comfort items with you for longer visits or procedures.
- Contact your allergist's office if you have questions about what to expect during the visit or procedure (e.g., first visit to the allergist, skin testing, food challenge).

See the **Food Allergy Stages Toddler** handout for questions about managing food allergies as your baby gets older.