

WHAT IS A FOOD CHALLENGE?



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This brochure will answer some of your questions about food challenges. We believe that parents are partners on the healthcare team, and we want you to be as informed as possible.

If you have questions or concerns, please call the Allergy clinic at (604) 875-2118.

If your child has been prescribed an epinephrine auto injector (Epi Pen, Allerject) you MUST bring it to the appointment.

Find more Tips for Helping Your Child Cope during Medical Procedures [here](#).

What is a Food Challenge?

A food challenge is the best test available for determining if your child can safely eat a food. The allergy doctor will decide if a food challenge is possible based on the results of your child's history, skin tests, and blood tests. Please ask questions if there is anything you are curious about.

What happens during a food challenge?

- Your child will be assessed by a nurse and the Allergist and you will be asked to sign a consent form for the food challenge.
- Your child will eat the food to be challenged.
- The challenge will start with a small amount of the food. Every 15-30 minutes, the amount of food eaten will increase.
- By the end of the challenge, your child will have eaten a portion size just right for his/her age.
- Your child will be watched for any signs of a reaction. It may take up to 5 hours to complete the test.

Will the food challenge be done if my child is sick?

No. If your child has a cold, flu, cough, wheeze, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever, the test will not be done. Please phone the Allergy Clinic to rebook the appointment.

Can my child eat or drink before the food challenge?

Your child can eat a light snack, but avoid large meals on the morning of the challenge. It is important that your child is hungry enough to eat a full serving during the food challenge.

Can my child continue taking his/her asthma medication before the food challenge?

Yes, your child can continue with regular preventer medications. These include:

- Fluticasone (Flovent TM)
- Budesonide (Pulmicort TM),
- Beclomethasone dipropionate (QVAR TM)
- Ciclesonide (Alvesco TM)
- Fluticasone and salmeterol (AdvairTM)
- Budesonide and formoterol (Symbicort TM)

If your child is using his/her reliever medication [e.g. salbutamol (Ventolin TM, terbutaline (Bricanyl TM))] more than 3 times/week, please tell the doctor who will be supervising the food challenge.

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How can I prepare for my child's appointment?

1. **Child Care Arrangements:**

Organize child care for your other children during the day of your visit. This allows you to give your full attention to your child during his or her challenge.

2. **Food:** you must bring the food to be challenged, please see attached form "What to bring to the food challenge appointment"

3. Please prepare the food to be challenged the way(s) your child would most likely eat it, and bring any condiments that would help make it tasty.

4. Bring a snack for your child: the challenge starts with very small amounts of food and your child may get hungry by the end of the challenge.

5. **Medications:** Bring all the medications that your child is currently taking to the appointment. If using asthma medications, please bring the spacer (AeroChamber TM, OptichamberTM).

6. **Entertainment:** Bring a favorite game or book to help take your child's mind off the challenge. If your child is anxious, you may also ask for a Child Life Specialist or volunteer to help your child prepare for the challenge.

7. Plan your route and parking: Learn more [here](#).

What are the risks of having a food challenge?

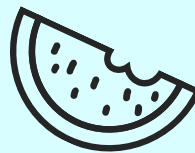
An allergic reaction may happen. Possible symptoms include:

- hives
- shortness of breath
- wheezing
- coughing
- vomiting
- diarrhea

Severe allergic (anaphylactic) reactions are possible, but the risk is low.

What happens if my child has a reaction?

- The test will stop and the doctor will examine your child.
- The doctor may administer:
 - Epinephrine
 - Antihistamines [such as cetirizine (Reactine TM)]
 - Steroid medication (inhaled or oral)
- Your child will stay extra time for observation.



Should my child stop taking any medicine before the food challenge? If so, which ones should be stopped?

Some medications can interfere with the challenge. Do **not** take the following medications for 5 days before the challenge:

- Dimenhydrinate (Gravol or generic equivalents)
- Antihistamines (Reactine, Claritin, Atarax, Aerius, Benadryl or generic equivalents)
- If you are not sure if your child's medication will interfere with the food challenge, please phone the allergy clinic at 604-875-2118.

What happens when the challenge is completed?

If your child passes the challenge:

- They should eat the food at least 1x/week.
- Your doctor will discuss how long you should keep their auto-injector close by.

If your child doesn't tolerate the challenge they should:

- Continue to avoid this food.
- Continue to wear a Medic Alert bracelet (depending on their age).
- Continue to carry the auto-injector.

Your doctor will talk to you about a follow-up in the future.