Children’s Allergy Clinic
General food challenges at home
Information for parents
Your child’s allergy assessment shows that it is now time to discover if they have outgrown their food allergy. This is done by giving your child the identified food within a controlled environment. Your child’s medical history and results indicate that it is safe for you to do this challenge from home.

**Step 1: picking a time for the food challenge**

**Is your child well?**

- To do a food challenge your child needs to be in good health. For example if they have a cold, flu or any other childhood illness they should not do the challenge.
- Also, if your child is asthmatic or gets eczema, don’t do the challenge unless their symptoms are well under control.
- If in any doubt about whether your child is well enough, postpone the food challenge for another time.

**Where should we do the food challenge?**

- The food challenge should be done at home in a calm environment with parental or adult supervision.
- Make sure you have enough time to do the challenge.

**What if my child takes antihistamines?**

It’s important that your child does not have any antihistamine medication in their body before doing a food challenge. Some antihistamines last longer than others. For example:

- Don’t give your child Piriton (chlorpheniramine), Phenergan, Vallergan within 48 hours of starting the challenge
- Don’t give your child longer acting antihistamines e.g. Zirtek (cetirizine), Clarityn (loratadine) for a whole week before doing a food challenge.
- It’s a good idea, if you child does use antihistamines, to do the food challenge at a time in the year when they are least affected by seasonal allergies.
Know what to do if your child has an allergic reaction!

It is important to have antihistamines available in case your child has a reaction at any stage of the challenge.

Before the food challenge, check the possible allergic symptoms (see below). If any of these symptoms occur, stop the food challenge and treat the child as needed.

**Symptoms checklist – look and learn what to do!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mild to moderate symptoms</th>
<th>Severe symptoms (possibly life-threatening)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Tingling or itching sensation in the mouth</td>
<td>• Difficulty in breathing either wheezy and/or hoarseness and/or croupy sound</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feeling hot or very chilled</td>
<td>• Decreased level of consciousness, faint, pale and floppy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Intense itching</td>
<td>• Collapse</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rapid development of nettle rash/wheals (hives)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Swelling, particularly of the face</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rising anxiety/feeling scared</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Nausea and/or vomiting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Abdominal pain</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pallor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mild wheeziness (give inhaler if available).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Treatment:**

- give anti-histamines and monitor child’s condition.

**Treatment:**

- Call 999 and seek emergency help immediately.
Step 2: Procedure for a food challenge at home

1. Make sure you have completed all the points under Step 1.

2. Prepare the food you are going to use for the challenge. It may be necessary to disguise it in a food your child is used to eating, such as a small piece of bread or if it’s liquid, in a small amount of drink.

3. Make sure it is not contaminated by anything else and use clean cutlery and crockery.

4. Touch your child’s lower lip with a crumb or drop of the food. Wait 15 minutes.

5. If there are no signs of an allergic reaction after 15 minutes, continue by giving your child a crumb of the food to eat, (or if it’s a liquid, a couple of drops). Wait another 15 minutes.

6. Increase the amounts for the next few stages from a crumb, to a pea-sized amount, then a teaspoonful.

7. If at any stage, an allergic reaction occurs, stop the challenge and give some antihistamine. Continue to watch your child for 6-10 hours as some allergic symptoms can develop a few hours after eating.

8. In the unlikely event that your child has a severe reaction, seek emergency help immediately. When the child has recovered please contact the allergy department for a reassessment of your child’s allergy management.

9. If this challenge is symptom free, then gradually add these foods to your child’s diet. If the challenge fails and your child has a mild/moderate reaction, then try again about 6 months later. Severe reactions at this stage will be extremely rare, but in the unlikely event that this does happen, once your child recovers please contact the allergy clinic for reassessment.
Dr C. Robertson
Consultant Paediatrician with interest in allergy
And
Children’s Allergy Nurses
Judith Ward and Elaine Cleaver
Community Paediatrics, Lower Ground 1
The Children’s Hospital
John Radcliffe Hospital
Headley Way, Oxford OX3 9DU
Tel: 01865 231994

Dr F. Obetoh
Consultant Paediatrician with interest in allergy
Community Paediatrics
The Children’s Hospital
John Radcliffe Hospital
Headley Way, Oxford OX3 9DU
Tel: 01865 231961

Dr J. Reed
Consultant Dermatologist
Department of Dermatology
Churchill Hospital
Old Road, Oxford OX3 7LJ
Tel: 01865 228224
If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221473 or email PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk

Dr Phillips, Paediatric Consultant
Judith Ward, Children’s Allergy Nurse
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Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.oxfordradcliffe.nhs.uk

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