FOOD ALLERGIES

What is a food alergie? Food alergie is any adverse reaction to an otherwise harmless food or food component that involves the body’s immune system. Although allergic reactions can occur virtually to any food, most reactions are caused by a limited number of foods: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, soy, wheat, peanuts, and tree nuts.
What are the symptoms? The most common symptoms involve the gastrointestinal tract, beginning with swelling or itching of the lips, mouth and/or throat. When an offending food enters the stomach, nausea, vomiting, cramping and diarrhea may occur. Itching, eczema, hives, and redness of the skin may also occur. Some people may experience sneezing, a runny nose, shortness of breath, or asthma. Anaphylaxis is a rare but life-threatening condition. Symptoms include severe itching, hives, swelling of the throat, breathing problems, unconsciousness, and even death.
What is food intolerance? Adverse reactions to foods that do not involve the immune system are known as food intolerance.” One of the most common may be the result of the body’s inability to digest sugars in food such as milk sugar intolerance. Other examples are food poisoning, metabolic reactions to food, reactions to drug-like chemicals in foods (e. g. caffeine and amines) and adverse reactions due to chemicals added to food.
How can a food alergie be diagnosed? If a food alergie is suspected, a board certified allergist should be consulted. Diagnosing a food alergie begins with a detailed medical history to identify the suspected food. The physician may suggest keeping a diary of foods eaten and symptoms that occur. Elimination diets are used to help diagnose and treat food allergies. Skin testing may also be useful. The physician might conduct a food challenge where the person eats portions of the suspected food under medical supervision. A testing method in which food extracts are placed under the tongue is unreliable and not an accepted procedure.
What is the treatment for a food alergie? Once the diagnosis of food alergie is confirmed, the only proven therapy is avoiding the offending food. However, do not take a food from your diet without checking with your doctor.