

Home Food Challenge

Introduction

The allergy specialist team have reviewed your clinical history and allergy test results which suggests that an allergy to the food in question is very unlikely. The specialist team has suggested a home food challenge procedure.

A home food challenge is a process whereby a previously avoided food is re-introduced starting with a small amount with gradual increments.

Why should I carry out a home food challenge?

It is very unlikely that you are allergic to this food and this can be confirmed by carrying out a home food challenge. Avoiding food/s can be difficult and may impact on your nutrition and health if you are missing out important nutrients. Safely reintroducing foods and consuming them regularly will help maintain your tolerance to the food.

How do I carry out the home food challenge?

- Carry out your food challenge at home.
- Have another adult with you during the process and for at least two hours after eating the challenge food. If it is more convenient to do the challenge in the evening, do so at least 2 hours before going to bed.
- Choose a day when you are feeling well (i.e., better to avoid when you have an infection such as 'cold' or 'flu'). If you have asthma, ensure it is well controlled before doing the challenge.
- Make sure you have your rescue medication to hand i.e., antihistamines / adrenaline auto-injector, blue inhaler if prescribed.
- Avoid the challenge food being contaminated with another food. For example, if you are doing a 'single' nut challenge, do not use a nut from a mixed bag of nuts. Instead, choose a bag of the single nut / freshly cracked nuts.
- If you have been advised to carry out a home food challenge for more than one food, complete the challenge with one food before starting the next food challenge (on a different day).
- The idea is to consume the challenge food over 4 or 5 days, starting with a very small amount of the food, gradually increasing this each day until you reach a normal portion of the food. You will receive an information sheet outlining the food doses.

What do I do if I develop a reaction?

The symptoms that you may experience during an allergic reaction may include rash, itching skin, swelling, sneezing, wheezing, coughing, hoarse voice, nausea, vomiting, dizzy, faint and difficulty breathing.

If at any time you develop a reaction, take your rescue medicines as advised by the allergy team in your management plan and / or seek urgent medical advice if required.

Contact the allergy team to let us know that you have had a reaction. Do not try the challenge food again until you have spoken to one of the allergy team.

Information for Patients

What do I do after successfully completing the challenge without having a reaction?

If you have completed the home food challenge and you have not experienced a reaction, you have successfully excluded an allergy to that food. Aim to eat this food 2-3 times a week to maintain your tolerance to it.

If you have any questions regarding this information or if you have experienced a reaction requiring rescue medication, do not hesitate to contact us on 0121 424 1807.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.