

A food allergy is an acquired hypersensitivity to what is normally considered a safe food. Food allergies occur more often in children than in adults: 5-8% of those ages 4 or under and approximately 1-4% of adults are affected. Together, approximately 11 million Americans suffer from some degree of food allergy. Annually, approximately 30,000 people receive life-saving emergency treatment and 150 fatalities occur.

A true allergy is caused by a person's immune system reacting to a food when first eaten. The body "remembers" that food and when it is eaten again, the immune system overreacts in an excessive and potentially life-threatening way.

Allergies can also be classic, also known as "atopic." Instead of an individual developing an allergy spontaneously, he or she inherits a predisposition to develop food or other allergies. Often, these individuals suffer from hay fever, asthma, or rashes and are more likely to develop a food allergy.

True food allergies may lead to severe allergic reactions or anaphylactic shock caused by rapid release of Immunoglobulin E (IgE). IgE is a natural component of the immune system, normally involved in protecting the body from parasites. However, when over-production of IgE is triggered by a food or other allergen, local or systemic inflammation, severe swelling, or hypersensitivity, reactions can occur.

Some food allergies may be attributed to cross-reactions with other allergy-causing substances. In these cases, a person who already has developed an allergy to a particular substance might be more likely to develop a particular food allergy. For example, people with a known allergy to ragweed pollen are more likely to develop an allergy to bananas or melons.

Although often misdiagnosed as a food allergy, food intolerance is different. Symptoms of food intolerance usually involve discomfort after eating the causal food, such as bloating, abdominal pain, and sometimes diarrhea. Specifically, food intolerance is due to a problem with a person's metabolism, *not* the immune system. Lactose intolerance, for example, is caused by the inability to produce the digestive enzyme (lactase) that breaks down the sugars found in milk and other dairy products (lactose).

Studies suggest that 10 to 20% of adult Americans incorrectly believe that they or someone in their family has a food allergy. Proper medical authorities should be consulted for confirmation and guidance.

There is no cure for a food allergy. Once diagnosed, a person will most likely have to contend with the condition for life. If a person has an allergy to a particular food, the only proven therapy is strict avoidance of the food or its products.

Adapted from an article by Keith R. Schneider, associate professor, Food Science and Human Nutrition Department; Renée M. Goodrich, associate professor, Food Science and Human Nutrition Department, Institute of Food and Agricultural Studies, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. 2009. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M. University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Millie Ferrer-Chancy, Interim Dean.  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fs123>

NLN/LPN Reading Passage 1

1. Which of the following titles is best for this passage?
  - A. Identifying Food Allergies
  - B. Food Allergies: Cures and Causes
  - C. Diet and Disease
  - D. The Realities of Food Allergies
  
2. A true food allergy is triggered by which of the following?
  - A. The lack of an immune system.
  - B. Lactose intolerance.
  - C. The body's inability to produce a digestive enzyme.
  - D. An overreaction of the immune system.
  
3. Which of the following is explicitly stated in the passage?
  - A. Food allergies and food intolerances are due to a person's metabolism.
  - B. A majority of Americans believe they or someone in their family has a food allergy.
  - C. Food allergies cannot be attributed to an inherited predisposition.
  - D. Food allergies may be linked to other allergy-causing substances.
  
4. The word "systemic" in the fourth paragraph means \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. complete.
  - B. incurable.
  - C. infectious.
  - D. painful.
  
5. What is the main purpose of the sixth paragraph?
  - A. To detail the causes of food intolerance.
  - B. To define lactose intolerance.
  - C. To explain varying theories of food intolerance.
  - D. To provide a general explanation of food intolerance.
  
6. The passage implies that \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. the author suffers from food allergies.
  - B. not all foods are as innocuous as they might seem.
  - C. food allergies are unpredictable.
  - D. food allergies should not be considered as serious ailments.

NLN/LPN Reading Passage 1

7. The main topic of this passage is \_\_\_\_\_
- A. food allergies.
  - B. identifying food allergies.
  - C. the importance of diet.
  - D. the functions of the digestive tract.
8. It can be inferred from this passage that \_\_\_\_\_
- A. a majority of people can expect to experience food allergies.
  - B. Immunoglobulin E is found only in mammals.
  - C. atopic allergies are extremely rare.
  - D. parasites pose a potential threat to the body.
9. All of the following are mentioned except \_\_\_\_\_
- A. reactions of the immune system.
  - B. examples of food intolerance.
  - C. hypersensitivity reactions.
  - D. analgesic cures for food allergies.
10. According to the passage, \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. food allergies usually dissipate over time.
  - B. food intolerance rarely requires medical attention.
  - C. 92 to 95 percent of young children are unaffected by food allergies.
  - D. allergic reactions are the result of a breakdown in metabolism.
11. All of the following are mentioned in the passage. Which two are compared?
- A. Food allergy statistics in the United States and Europe.
  - B. Immunoglobulin and anaphylactic shock.
  - C. Food allergies and inflammation.
  - D. Food allergies and food intolerance.
12. The author's primary purpose in writing this passage is which of the following?
- A. To help people cope with food allergies.
  - B. To downplay the differences between food allergies and food intolerance.
  - C. To explain the medical terminology associated with food allergies.
  - D. To provide some basic facts concerning food allergies.

**NLN/LPN Reading Passage 1 Answers**

1. D
2. D
3. D
4. A
5. D
6. B
7. A
8. D
9. D
10. C
11. D
12. D

**Note:** For questions or explanations, please visit one of the Indian River State College's Academic Support Centers to review answers with an English/reading instructor.