



### Key points

- Your child should not eat or drink for 2 hours before the food challenge.
- There are medications that your child may need to stop taking before the food challenge.
- There are things you must bring with you to the food challenge, such as the challenge food and an epinephrine auto-injector.
- If your child is not feeling well on the day of the food challenge, we will have to reschedule the food challenge.

### Contact us

- If your child is not feeling well (has a fever, more allergy/asthma symptoms than usual), call the Allergy Program at 617-355-6117. The food challenge will need to be rescheduled.
- You can also call us at 617-355-6117 with any questions or concerns.

### What is an open food challenge?

An open food challenge is a test that can be used to find out if your child is allergic to a certain food.

### Where is the food challenge done?

The open food challenge takes place in the Allergy Program office. The office is located on Boston Children's Hospital's Main Campus at 300 Longwood Ave. on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Fegan Building.

### How should I get my child ready for the food challenge?

#### Talk with your child

If appropriate, tell your child in simple words why the challenge is needed and what will happen. For example, you might say, "We're going to the allergy doctor's office. You're going to get to eat a little bit of [name of allergen] to see if your body is OK with it. If everything is OK, you'll get to eat little bit more."

#### Eating and drinking

- **Your child should not eat or drink anything for 2 hours before the challenge.**
- It is helpful if your child is hungry for the challenge.
- Your child will be able to sip water during the challenge, but they cannot eat other foods.

#### Medication

**There are medications that your child needs to stop taking before the challenge.**

- ☑ You can give your child daily controller asthma medications (examples: Singulair, Flovent, Pulmicort) as usual.

### DO NOT STOP giving your child medications except for those below.

- ☑ **1 week before the challenge:** Stop giving your child antihistamines, which can interfere with the challenge results. These include:
  - Allegra (fexofenadine)
  - Atarax (hydroxyzine)
  - Claritin (loratadine)
  - Cyproheptadine
  - Xyzal (levocetirizine)
  - Zyrtec (cetirizine)
- Antihistamines are also in many non-prescription cold or allergy medicines, like:
  - Actifed
  - Benadryl (*this can be taken 3 days before the challenge*)
  - Dimetapp
  - Pediacare
  - Tavist
  - Triaminic
- Call 617-355-6117 to speak with an allergy nurse if you are:
  - Unsure of what medicines contain antihistamines
  - Not able to stop a medication, or if your child has symptoms while off a medication

### What do I need to bring to the challenge?

The visit can take up to 3 hours.

- Please bring small toys, games, tablet/phone or books for your child to use while you are waiting.
- **Bring 4–8 oz. (1/2 - 1 cup) of the food to be challenged.** The Allergy Program staff will give you some ideas on what to bring. If you forget to bring the food, your challenge will have to be rescheduled.
  - All foods should be pre-cut and easy to measure.
  - The food should be cooked if needed (eggs, shellfish, fish etc.).
  - Remove shells from shellfish, peanuts or tree nuts.
  - Make sure that the challenge food is not cross-contaminated with other foods (like other kinds of nuts).
  - You can bring condiments, like ketchup and mustard, if your child has had them before and is not allergic to them.

- Make sure to bring your child's epinephrine auto-injector. **If you forget your epinephrine auto-injector, your challenge will have to be rescheduled.**

## What if my child is sick before the challenge?

- Your child must not be sick on the day before and the day of the food challenge visit.
- Call the Allergy program to reschedule at 617-355-6117 if your child has:
  - A fever
  - Diarrhea
  - Rash
  - Viral illness
  - Vomiting (throwing up)
  - More allergy or asthma symptoms than usual

## Who will do the challenge?

- A nurse will do your child's food challenge.
- The allergist is available if there is any concern.
- **Please note: This is not a doctor's visit. You will not see your child's regular allergist.**

## What happens during the challenge?

1. When you get to the clinic, register with the front desk. **It is important that you are on time for your child's appointment.** If you are late, the challenge may have to be re-scheduled.
2. Your child's temperature, blood pressure, height and weight are measured.
3. An allergy nurse meets with you and your child, asks some questions, listens to your child's lungs and looks at your child's skin.
4. A doctor or nurse practitioner will ask for your consent (agreement) to do the food challenge
5. Your child is given the food without changing its taste or the way it looks.
6. Your child eats the food in increasing amounts over a set amount of time.

7. Your child is watched carefully for 30 to 60 minutes after the last amount of food is given.

We understand that your child may be uncooperative. **We will not force your child to eat the challenge food.** Your child's allergist will decide what to do if your child is unable to finish the food challenge.

## What if my child has a reaction during the challenge?

- Your child will be watched closely during the challenge by the allergy nurse for any signs of a reaction. An allergist will be available at all times.
- It is possible that your child will have an allergic reaction, like hives, a rash, throwing up, diarrhea or low blood pressure.
- If your child has a reaction, the allergy nurse will stop the challenge and may give medication, such as the epinephrine auto-injector. Your child may need to be watched in the Emergency Department and/or be admitted to the hospital for observation.

## What should I do if my child has a reaction at home?

If you're on your way home or at home and your child has an allergic reaction, **such as hives, a rash, vomiting (throwing up), diarrhea or low blood pressure:**

- Give your child the epinephrine auto-injector and call 911 right away.
- Call the Boston Children's page operator at 617-355-6363 and ask to speak to the allergist on call.

## Will my insurance cover a food challenge?

- All insurance companies have different plans and coverage models. We recommend that you call your insurance company for your specific coverage information.
- Please call your insurance company before the challenge to give time for a referral to be processed (if needed).

*This Family Education Sheet is available in [Arabic](#) and [Spanish](#).*