



Managing Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis During the COVID Pandemic

The extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic present unique challenges for patients with food allergy. During a crisis, food insecurity and shortages may make it difficult to find nutritious, allergy-safe food. For food allergy COVID resources and links to food assistance programs, go to Food Allergy Research Education (FARE) (<https://www.foodallergy.org/living-food-allergies/food-allergy-essentials/covid-19-resources>).

In light of potential changes to restaurant food preparation and delivery, it's important for food-allergic people to remember to speak to the staff about their specific allergies, ask about risk for allergen contamination in the kitchen, and ask about new changes to the menu or any substitutions. Orders should be checked at curbside or delivery to make sure they look correct.

In regard to seeking medical help for allergic reactions, patients and families may have concerns about the risk of COVID-19 exposure in the Emergency Department. Rady Children's Hospital has implemented several measures to ensure the safety of all patients and staff during COVID-19, and you should not hesitate to bring your child to the Emergency Department if you need help. You can expect health screenings (including symptoms and temperature check) at all entrances, and all patients and staff are required to wear face masks in the hospital. Patients with symptoms concerning for COVID-19 are sent to a drive-through screening center, reducing the potential for infected patients in the clinics and even Emergency Department. Here's a link to a video about the safety of the Emergency Department: <https://vimeo.com/403776704>. For more information about visiting Rady Children's Hospital during COVID-19 go to <https://www.rchsd.org/patients-visitors/>.

All food-allergic (and insect venom-allergic) patients should make sure they have an up-to-date allergy and anaphylaxis emergency plan, at least two epinephrine auto-injectors, and an antihistamine.

Treatment of Allergic Reaction Recommendations during COVID-19:

- Have a low threshold for using epinephrine to treat allergic symptoms. It works better when given early. Epinephrine is safe, fast, and effective. Epinephrine can usually

improve allergic symptoms within 5 minutes, and it works to stop the reaction altogether. You will not harm someone if you use an epinephrine auto-injector when they might not have needed it.

- Think “more than skin, Epi goes in”. Anything more than mild rash/itching/external swelling should be treated with epinephrine.
- Consider using epinephrine if your child has a history of a past severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis, even if they are only having mild symptoms.

Monitoring of Allergic Reaction Recommendations during COVID-19:

- If symptoms are mild mild/itching/external swelling and your child feels otherwise well, use antihistamine (Benadryl/diphenhydramine or Zyrtec/cetirizine), and monitor them at home. Call your child’s primary physician or allergist for advice if needed.
- If symptoms are more than mild rash/itching/external swelling OR if symptoms appear mild but your child does not feel well, give epinephrine. Then:
 - If symptoms are not improving within 5 minutes, give a second dose of epinephrine and call 911.
 - Otherwise, call 911 or drive to the ED in a private car and wait in the parking lot. If you drive, remember to bring the second epinephrine auto-injector along with you. Contact your child’s primary physician or allergist for advice. If symptoms are not resolving or your child continues to feel unwell, give second dose of epinephrine and go into the ED.