

Medic Alert bracelets can save lives in food allergy attacks

Food allergy reactions can be life threatening and have far-reaching effects on children, their families, schools or early care and education programmes they attend. It is therefore important to know about allergies and to promote the use of Medic Alert Foundation bracelets.



Although the immune system normally protects people from germs, in people with food allergies, the immune system mistakenly responds to food as if it was harmful and has a specific and reproducible immune response to certain foods.

This response can be severe and life threatening, such as anaphylaxis, a sudden and severe allergic reaction that may cause death, however not all allergic reactions will develop into anaphylaxis. The prevalence of food allergies among children has increased and allergic reactions to foods have become the most common cause of anaphylaxis in community health settings.

The Medic Alert Foundations says eight foods or food groups account for 90% of serious allergic reactions, namely milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, wheat, soy, peanuts and tree nuts.

Symptoms

Children, experiencing a food allergy, may describe the reaction as:

- It feels like something is poking my tongue
- My tongue (or mouth) is tingling (or burning)
- My tongue (or mouth) itches
- My tongue feels like there is hair on it
- My mouth feels funny
- There's a frog in my throat; there's something stuck in my throat
- My tongue feels full (or heavy)
- My lips feel tight
- It feels like there are bugs in there (to describe itchy ears)
- It (my throat) feels thick
- It feels like a bump is on the back of my tongue (throat)

The symptoms and severity of allergic reactions to food can be different between individuals and can be different for someone over time. According to the Medic Alert Foundation of SA, children with food allergies are more likely to have asthma or other allergic conditions than those without food allergies.

Alerting the public

There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction. Early and quick recognition and treatment of allergic reactions that may lead to anaphylaxis can prevent serious health problems or death. Wearing a bracelet can save your child's life. These are available online at www.medicalert.co.za.

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