

# LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

## Food Allergy and Intolerances



What is the difference between food allergies and food intolerances?

### Food Allergy

A food allergy is an immune system response (allergic reaction) caused by inhaling, swallowing or touching a food substance which the body mistakes to be harmful. Most children are diagnosed with allergies between ages 3-5. Many children may eventually outgrow their allergies.

### Symptoms

Eczema, hives, diarrhoea, reflux, itching and swelling of skin, lips and throat, difficulty breathing (asthma can be an allergic response), headache, behavioural and mood change, vomiting and in extreme cases anaphylaxis - the most severe form of allergic reaction that is potentially life threatening and must be treated as a medical emergency, requiring immediate treatment and urgent medical attention.

**Allergies are serious and can be life threatening. All early childhood services should be aware of allergic reactions that can occur in children and strategies to minimise this risk.**

### Food Intolerance

Food intolerances are adverse reactions by the body to ingested foods or chemicals that do not involve the immune system. Food intolerances are more prevalent than food allergies and there are various theories as to why food intolerances occur.

### Symptoms

Rashes and swelling, stomach pains, bowel irritations and failure to thrive

What are some tips to help prevent reactions from food occurring in early childhood settings?

- Prevent sharing and trading of food and drinks, food utensils and containers
- Clearly label bottles, other drinks, lunchboxes and containers with the name of the child for whom they are intended
- Children with severe allergies should ideally only eat food prepared from home
- Have a food allergy management policy in place and ensure all staff and parents at your setting are familiar with it.
- Promote your allergy management policy to parents at initial enrolment and then in regular communications with parents

For more information on Allergies and Intolerances visit the Food Foundations website at [www.naqlid.org/category/food-foundations](http://www.naqlid.org/category/food-foundations)