

Paediatric Allergy and Clinical Immunology

Food Challenge Information – Advice for Families

Your child has been referred for a food challenge. Some children will have a food challenge to find out if they have a food allergy. Some food allergies, like milk, egg, wheat and soy, might go away over time so some children will have a food challenge to check if they have outgrown a food allergy. Blood tests and allergy skin prick tests can help us decide whether a food challenge could be possible for your child.

Food challenges are done at the hospital. Your food challenge nurse will be there to supervise your child to make sure they are safe, and a doctor will be nearby. We will give the food in small doses and gradually move up to bigger doses if your child tolerates the food. If there are any reactions then we will stop the food challenge and give some medicine, like antihistamine or adrenaline. The food challenge will take about 4 hours in total, but this may be longer or shorter depending on whether your child reacts.

Before your child's food challenge

- Explain to your child what is going to happen. They may be scared or worried so it is important that they know what is going on.
- Please don't give your child any antihistamine (such as Loratadine or Cetirizine) for at least 3 days before the food challenge.
- If your child is unwell (e.g. has a fever, cough or wheeze), we will not be able to do the challenge. Please let us know as soon as possible so we can rebook your child and give that time slot to someone else. You can contact the scheduler by phone: (09) 307 4949 ext. 28728 or 0800 543 767 or by email: StarshipOutpatients@adhb.govt.nz.
- If you have any questions or concerns about the challenge please call the Immunology Nurse Specialist on 021 489 239.

On the day of your child's food challenge

Please bring:

- Toys, games, books or other things to entertain your child during the challenge. Our hospital play specialist will help to find any other toys, games or activities your child may need.
- Some snacks for you and your child.
- A change of clothing for your child and yourself, in case your child vomits or gets covered in food during the challenge.

- A pram for young children.

There will usually be other children having a food challenge at the same time as your child. We ask that only one parent or caregiver attends and that no siblings are brought along as we have limited space. If you have any concerns about this then please contact the Immunology Nurse Specialist.

Websites that might be helpful

- Australasian Allergy website: www.allergy.org.au
- Allergy New Zealand: <http://www.allergy.org.nz/>
- Starship Hospital Information: <https://www.starship.org.nz/patients-parents-and-visitors/>
- Starship Family Information Service: <https://www.starship.org.nz/patients-parents-and-visitors/health-information-and-education-resources/family-information-service/>