A food allergy is caused when your immune system mistakenly thinks that certain foods are a threat to your body. A food intolerance doesn’t usually involve your immune system, however, coeliac disease is an intolerance to gluten and does involve the immune system.

**Allergy facts**

Between 1–2% of adults** and 5–8% of children in the UK have a food allergy**

**What is a…**

**Food allergy**

Food allergic reactions range from mild to very serious. Symptoms can affect different areas of the body at the same time and can include rashes, swelling, chest tightness and shortness of breath. Serious cases can lead to anaphylaxis (a life-threatening reaction) and death.

**Food intolerance**

Food intolerance can be caused by difficulties digesting certain ingredients, such as lactose from milk. Symptoms include bloating, diarrhoea, and stomach cramps and usually only occur several hours after eating the food.

**Coeliac disease**

Coeliac disease is caused by a reaction of the immune system to gluten. Symptoms include bloating, diarrhoea, tiredness, mouth ulcers, anaemia, osteoporosis and usually occur several hours after eating the food.

All types of food can cause a reaction. However, certain proteins are responsible for most food allergies and intolerances. The most common food allergies in children are caused by:

- **Eggs**
- **Peanuts**
- **Fish**
- **Tree nuts**
- **Milk**
- **Eggs**
- **Tree nuts**
- **Milk**

There is no cure for food allergies, food intolerance or coeliac disease. The only way to prevent a reaction is to avoid the foods that make you ill.

**Odds that a child with two allergic parents will develop allergies:**

- 70%

**Odds that a child with one allergic parent will develop allergies:**

- 33%

**Treatment**

For more information, visit [food.gov.uk/allergy](http://food.gov.uk/allergy) or [nhs.uk/conditions/allergies](http://nhs.uk/conditions/allergies)

- Sign up to our allergy alerts on [food.gov.uk/email](http://food.gov.uk/email), or follow #AllergyAlert on Twitter and Facebook.
- Let’s keep connected at [food.gov.uk/twitter](http://food.gov.uk/twitter) and [food.gov.uk/facebook](http://food.gov.uk/facebook).
- Join our conversation at [food.gov.uk/twitter](http://food.gov.uk/twitter).
- Watch us on [food.gov.uk/youtube](http://food.gov.uk/youtube).

Sources:

- **Gillen, G. K., et al. (2006) Independent inquiry into the age specific population-based proportion of food allergy (Coeliac disease) in the UK.**