

Prognosis and Management

It is difficult to determine whether or not your child will outgrow their allergy. Typically, seafood allergies develop later in life and are less likely to be outgrown than other food allergies. Only about 3.5 to 4% of people with seafood allergies eventually outgrow them.



FOOD ALLERGY PROGRAM

The Food Allergy Program at Children's National Medical Center provides comprehensive services in the evaluation and management of a wide variety of food allergies, including IgE-mediated food allergy, gastrointestinal food allergy, and eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorders.

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RESOURCES

For more detailed information about food allergies, visit:

- The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (www.foodallergy.org)
- The Food Allergy Initiative (www.faiusa.org)

www.childrensnational.org

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ALL about FISH & SHELLS ALLERGIES



Overview of Fish and Shellfish Allergies

Fish and shellfish allergies occur in only about 0.1% of young children in the United States.

It is more common for these allergies to develop in adulthood: 40% of people with fish allergy and 60% of those with shellfish allergy acquire the allergy as adults. Shellfish allergy is in fact the most common food allergy in adults. Reactions to fish and shellfish are often severe, and shellfish in particular is one of the most frequent triggers of anaphylaxis.

Fish

There are a number of different kinds of fish that can cause a fish-allergic reaction. Salmon, tuna, and halibut are responsible for a majority of fish allergies. If your child has a fish allergy, it is generally recommended that he/she stay away from all fish. This is because most people who are allergic to one fish are usually allergic to other types of fish as well. You may have heard that some people with a fish allergy are able to tolerate canned tuna or salmon. However, it is usually recommended to avoid canned fish and it is imperative to consult with your child's allergist on this issue.

Shellfish

There are two families of shellfish:

- Crustacea - shrimp, crab, crawfish, prawns, and lobster
- Mollusks - clams, scallops, oysters, mussels, abalone, cockle, octopus, squid, and snail (escargot)

The most common shellfish allergies are to crustacea, specifically shrimp, crab and lobster. Usually it is recommended that people with a shellfish allergy avoid all shellfish. Some people with an allergy to one shellfish group may be able to tolerate the other group. However, you should consult with your child's allergist before exposing your child to other types of shellfish.



If my child is allergic to fish, should he/she also avoid shellfish??

Despite both being "seafood," fish and shellfish are actually in two different food families. That means that if someone is allergic to fish, but testing to shellfish is negative, he/she may be able to eat shellfish. Of course, cross-contamination is always a risk because fish and shellfish are often handled and displayed together at stores, and cooked or fried together at restaurants. Be sure to talk with your allergist to come up with a plan for your child.

How to avoid a seafood allergic reaction

It is very important to be able to identify sources of fish and/or shellfish in order to help your child avoid them. Any packaged food containing fish and/or shellfish is required to clearly state that on its label.

Some Sources of Fish/Shellfish:

- Fish sticks
- Anchovies
- Asian dishes – many use fish sauce as a flavoring base
- Salad dressings, particularly Caesar
- Worcestershire sauce – often contains anchovies
- Surimi is imitation crabmeat made from fish
- Eating out – When eating out, be aware of the possibility of cross-contamination. It is important to make sure the food your child orders is not cooked in the same pan or the same oil used to cook fish and/or shellfish.

In general, it is advised that fish and/or shellfish-allergic individuals avoid seafood restaurants. There is a high risk of cross-contamination. Also, there is a possibility that allergen can become airborne while fish and/or shellfish are being cooked and potentially cause an allergic reaction.

Can iodine cause an adverse reaction in someone with a fish/shellfish allergy?

No, allergy to iodine and allergy to fish/shellfish are not related. Iodine is used in many radiographic procedures. Often the radiologist will ask if the patient is allergic to shellfish or fish. In reality, it is not necessary to worry about cross-reactions with iodine if your child has a fish or shellfish allergy.