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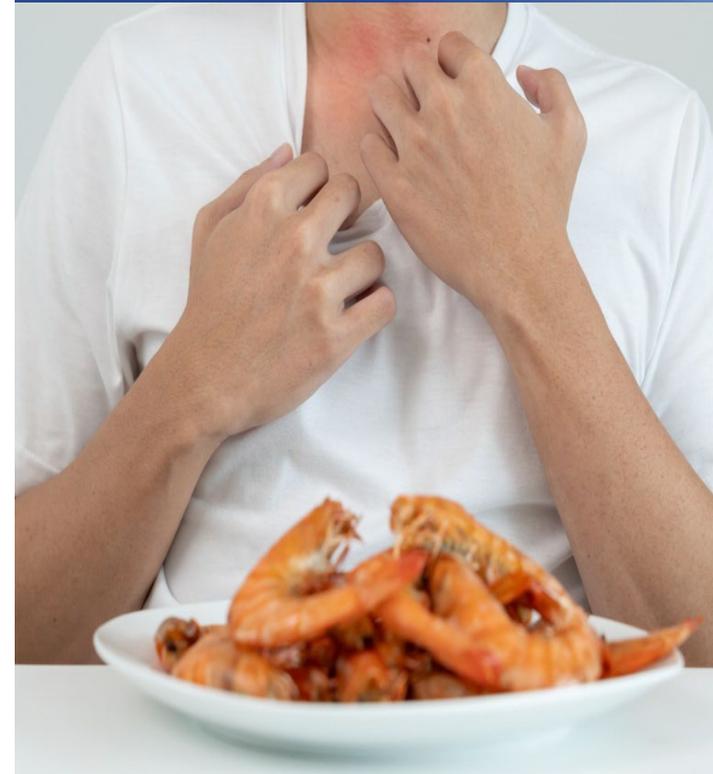
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Department of
Rheumatology, Allergy & Immunology

Shellfish Allergy



What is a Shellfish Allergy?

Shellfish allergy is the most common food allergy in adults.

When you have a shellfish allergy, your body's immune system mistakenly identifies the shellfish protein as harmful. Your body then releases chemicals in your bloodstream, which result in symptoms such as rashes, and eye or lip swelling. Shellfish allergies may also result in a potentially life threatening reaction called "anaphylaxis".

What are Examples of Shellfish?

Crustaceans (and common names)

- Prawn, shrimp, langoustine, scampi, "ang kar"
- Crab, mud crab, flower crab, meat crab
- Lobster, crayfish, kreef

Mollusks

- Mussels, oysters, clams
- Squid, octopus, cuttlefish
- Abalone
- Scallop
- Snails

Common Local food which may contain Crustaceans

- Laksa, mee siam
- Prawn paste chicken
- Blachan, rojak sauce, shrimp-based sambal, chinchalok
- Popiah
- Dim Sum, wantan/wontan, dumpling

What Causes Shellfish Allergies?

Most shellfish allergies happen because of a muscle protein called "tropomyosin", which is found in a wide variety of shellfish.

Within the shellfish family, the crustacean group causes the most allergic reactions.

People with allergy to crustaceans may be able to eat mollusks. However, some people are allergic to both crustaceans and mollusks.

What precautions do I need to take if I have shellfish allergy?

Cooking does not remove the shellfish allergen. You don't have to eat shellfish to have a reaction. You may react if you breathe in cooking fumes, smell shellfish being processed, or if your food touched shellfish.

When eating out, ask about how food is prepared and what ingredients are used. Some foods may have touched the seafood that causes your allergic reactions.

Check food labels for ingredients that you have to avoid.

Care Management

If you have severe reactions, you should carry an epinephrine autoinjector (Epipen).