



SNEEZE GAZETTE™

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Holidays and Food Allergy

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Plan ahead!

Food Allergy

should not

prevent you from

enjoying holiday

cuisine!

Holiday time is here! This season revolves around social gatherings and eating. Food centric holiday gatherings can cause a lot of anxiety for those of us with food allergies, but this does not have to occur when you are well prepared and educated about how to avoid potentially allergenic food and the treatment of allergic reactions. Take precautions this season to make your holiday eating experience safe and enjoyable.

The most common food allergies include wheat, eggs, milk, soybean, peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, and fish. Be sure to review your food allergy action plan with your allergist. It is important to recognize early symptoms and react immediately. Follow your doctor's instructions for treatment. Food allergies may result in hives, eczema or itchy scaly skin, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, itching swelling or rash around the mouth and throat, coughing, runny nose, wheezing, difficulty breathing, lightheadedness, and/or decreased blood pressure.

If you have questions about your food allergies, be sure to consult your allergist to determine whether that food allergy exists and/or persists; if food allergy is questionable after skin and blood testing, a supervised food challenge in the doctor's office may be recommended.

Homemade holiday dishes do not have ingredient lists and can be contaminated with trace amounts of allergenic foods: this can occur through contact with storage containers, baking pans, and utensils. Ask for the ingredients of the foods you are eating and how it was prepared and stored. Systemic allergic reactions come from ingestion of the food to which you are allergic not from skin contact or inhalation of that food. Physical contact can cause skin irritation, hives, or a rash.

Tips for holiday gatherings:

1. Contact the host of holiday events and educate them about your food allergies. Remind them that even small amounts of the food to which you are allergic can elicit a reaction: one little bite CAN HURT.

2. Always ask for all the ingredients of a dish if you are unsure of whether you can eat it.

3. Bring your own allergy free treats to contribute to the party: A host of allergy free recipes can be found at www.AAAAI.org and on the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network at www.foodallergy.org.

4. Start a precedent and post a list of ingredients in the foods you prepare and bring to events: others may follow the trend making navigating through a table filled with food easier for allergic individuals.

5. When children have holiday parties at school, send them with their own allergy free treats so that they will not feel left out of the festivities.

6. Always have your allergy medi-



Bring some allergy-free treats with you!

cations updated and with you, especially self injectable epinephrine, when attending a holiday event where unrecognized food allergens may be hiding.

Food allergies should not prevent you from enjoying holiday cuisine. Plan ahead and be proactive about preventing accidental ingestion that may lead to an allergic reaction.

By Denise Kearney, MD

