

What is a Food Challenge?



4480 Oak Street, Vancouver, BC V6H 3V4
604-875-2345 • 1-888-300-3088
www.bcchildrens.ca

This brochure will answer some of your questions about food challenges. We believe that parents are partners on the healthcare team, and we want you to be as informed as possible. If you have questions or concerns, please call the **Allergy clinic at (604) 875-2118**.

Will the food challenge be done if my child is sick?

No. If your child has a cold, flu, cough, wheeze, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever, the test will not be done. Please phone the Allergy Clinic to re-book the appointment.

What is a Food Challenge?

A food challenge is the best test available for determining if your child can safely eat a food. The allergy doctor will decide if a food challenge is possible based on the results of your child's history, skin tests, and blood tests. You and your child may be anxious because of past experiences. However, it is important for you and your child to remain calm before the challenge. Remaining calm will allow us to interpret the results of the challenge in a way that will best help your child. A good understanding of the procedure before the challenge day will help reduce anxiety. Please ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

What happens during a food challenge?

- You will be asked to sign a consent form for the food challenge.
- Your child will eat _____.
- You should bring _____.
- It will start with a small amount of the food. Every 15-30 minutes, the amount of food eaten will increase.
- By the end of the challenge, your child will have eaten a portion size just right for his/her age.

- Your child will be watched for any signs of a reaction
- It may take up to 3-4 hours to complete the test.

What are the risks of having a food challenge?

An allergic reaction may happen. The reaction may be similar to the child's first reaction or it could include new symptoms. Symptoms could be:

- ▶ hives
- ▶ shortness of breath
- ▶ wheezing
- ▶ coughing
- ▶ vomiting or diarrhea.

Severe allergic (anaphylactic) reactions are possible, but the risk is low.

What happens if my child has a reaction?

- The test will stop
- The doctor will examine your child
- The doctor may order some medicines such as: • epinephrine • antihistamines [such as cetirizine (Reactine™) or diphenhydramine (Benadryl™)] • steroids
- Your child will stay extra time for observation
- If a severe reaction occurs, further management may be necessary.

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Can my child eat or drink before the food challenge?

Your child can eat a light snack, but avoid large meals on the morning of the challenge. It is important that your child is hungry enough to eat a full serving during the food challenge.

What happens when the challenge is completed?

If your child passes the challenge, he/she should eat the food at least once a week. Your doctor will discuss with you how long you should keep the auto-injector (Epipen™/Twinject™) close by.

If your child does not pass the challenge, he/she should continue to avoid this food. He/she will continue to wear a MedicAlert™ bracelet (depending on his/her age), and carry the auto-injector. Your doctor will talk to you about follow-up in the future.

Should my child stop taking any medicine before the food challenge? If so, which ones should be stopped?

Yes, some medications can interfere with the challenge. **Do not take the following medications during the 5 days before the challenge:**

- Some cough and cold medications** - Avoid products that contain antihistamines.
- Dimenhydrinate** (Gravol™ or generic equivalents)
- Antihistamines** such as cetirizine (Reactine™), loratadine (Claritin™), hydroxyzine (Atarax™), desloratadine (Aerius™), diphenhydramine (Benadryl™) or generic equivalents

If you are not sure if your child's medication will interfere with the food challenge, please phone the allergy clinic at 604-875-2118.

Can my child continue taking his/her asthma medication before the food challenge?

Yes, your child can continue with regular preventer medications. These include:

- ▶ Fluticasone (Flovent™),
- ▶ Budesonide (Pulmicort™),
- ▶ Beclomethasone dipropionate (QVAR™)
- ▶ Ciclesonide (Alvesco™)
- ▶ Fluticasone and salmeterol (Advair™)
- ▶ Budesonide and formoterol (Symbicort™)
- ▶ Montelukast sodium (Singulair™).

If your child is using his/her reliever medication [e.g. salbutamol (Ventolin™), terbutaline (Bricanyl™)] more than 3 times/week, please tell the doctor who will be supervising the food challenge.

What should my child bring to the appointment?

1. **Medications:** Bring all the medications that your child is currently taking to the appointment. If using asthma medications, please bring the spacer (AeroChamber™, Optichamber™).
2. **Entertainment:** Bring a favorite game or book to make your child feel more comfortable. E.g. Gameboy™, iPod™, dvd movie .