

Food allergy in children

Dr Erwin Khoo emphasised that food allergies have different allergenicity.



Charmaine Lavinia Alphonso Augustin pointed out food allergies causes an immune system response.



FOOD allergy is an abnormal response of the body to a certain food. The risk of food allergies increases if parents or siblings of the child have known food allergies. Most allergies occur in the first year of life. It may be short term and the child may outgrow the allergies.

IMU Pediatrician Dr Erwin Khoo emphasised that food allergies have different allergenicity.

“The degree of allergy varies among children and may depend on the dose of the allergen ingested. Common food allergies are peanuts, tree nuts such as cashew nuts, milk, eggs, wheat, soy, fish and shellfish.”

IMU Dietitian Charmaine Lavinia Alphonso Augustin pointed out to the difference between food allergies and food intolerance.

“Food allergies causes an immune system response and can be life threatening. On the other hand, food intolerance are more common than food allergies. It does not affect the immune system, can be unpleasant but rarely dangerous and may occur because a person can’t digest a food substance,” she said.

Charmaine explained that allergic



Food allergies can get worse and become dangerous.

symptoms may begin within minutes to an hour after ingesting the food. It can involve only one part of the body or more severe involve more than one part of the body.

Among the symptoms are itching or swelling of the lips, tongue or mouth, itching or tightness in the throat, difficulty breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, cramps, hives and swelling, eczema, wheezing and lowered blood pressure.

Among the things parents can do if the child has a known food allergy is to

avoid the foods that cause the symptoms as there is no definite cure for the food allergy. Reading food label and providing supplementation as well as planning well when dining out.

Some children may be given certain foods again after three to six months to see if they have outgrown the allergy.

She also advised parents to keep a food diary; with details of food, amount, time and any symptoms experienced and bring this when meeting with the doctor and dietitian. **III**