

Food Allergies / Time and Eternity

Carol: Are there any particular foods that make you sick? Maybe you know someone who just can't eat certain things. Sometimes we think they're just being fussy, but actually some people die from food allergies. So let's learn more about it today.

Hello my friend, and Welcome to Women of Hope. I'm Carol.

Tammy: And I'm Tammy. Hi! Not long ago on Women of Hope, our nurse Julie talked about allergies to pollens, insects and animals. She's come back today to tell us about food allergies. Welcome Julie; please remind us...what is an allergy?

Julie: An allergy is when our body *over-reacts* to some substance, something we've eaten, something we've breathed in...or a bite from an insect. The body tries to fight this substance, producing something called *histamine*. Histamine starts a set of reactions; they can include a runny nose, itchy nose and throat, a rash, or hives, which are itchy red lumps. Histamine can cause breathing problems and wheezing, and even vomiting and diarrhea. Most allergic reactions pass with time, but if a person is very allergic to something, they can go into shock - it's called an *anaphylactic shock* - their throat and tongue swell up, they can't breathe, and they're pale and floppy - and they can die.

I should explain that some things make you feel sick but they don't actually cause an allergic reaction. Most bad reactions to food are *intolerance*, rather than *allergies*. It's caused by a chemical reaction, not histamine. You might vomit, have a headache and a fast heartbeat and get many of the same symptoms, but not the itchy rash or the runny, itchy nose. People can have bad reactions to almost any food - dairy products, eggs, many fruits, onions, coffee, chocolate, tomatoes, red wine, wheat; these are some of the most common ones.

Food *allergy* symptoms usually happen within a few minutes to an hour after eating certain foods. First your mouth might be itchy and it might be hard to swallow or breathe. Later, as the food is digested, you might feel sick and vomit, with stomach pains and diarrhea. Or you might get hives or a rash on your skin, or asthma. If you see a person whose throat and tongue swell up, they can't breathe, and they're pale and floppy, you need to find medical help immediately! They're probably having an *anaphylactic shock* and they need an injection of *adrenaline*.

Carol: So what are the common foods that cause allergies? I know about nuts, and cow's milk, and eggs, because I remember the nurse told me to be very careful when I started to give these foods to my babies. I just gave them a tiny bit, and watched to see if they got sick.

Julie: You're right Carol. Cow's milk, nuts, eggs and soy bean products cause about 90% of food allergies. There are other foods that often cause bad reactions; fish and seafood, grains such as wheat, oats, and rye, and food additives like MSG.

Carol: I hear a lot about children being allergic to peanuts, or groundnuts, but I don't remember that when I was a child. Are more children allergic to foods these days?

Julie: Yes, it seems so. Did you know that breast-feeding a baby for only four to six months seems to protect them from developing allergies in early childhood? If you can't breastfeed your baby, try to use a special formula - it's called a partially hydrolysed milk formula. It has most of the proteins that cause eczema and milk allergies already broken down. Did you get that - a *partially hydrolysed milk* formula. Ask your health worker, especially if you have allergies in your family.

And here's another point - babies who start solids early, are more likely to get allergies. So just give your little baby breast milk if you can until about 6 months!

And babies who live with cigarette smoke are more likely to get allergies too. A very good reason not to smoke.

Carol: I believe children with allergies often learn to tolerate those foods after a while.

Julie: Yes, children usually outgrow allergies to milk, wheat, soy and eggs by age 5, but they will not usually grow out of an allergy to fish or peanuts. If they have ever had an allergic reaction, don't risk trying them again unless a doctor is supervising the child.

Tammy: How could you work out what food you're allergic to? Do you just think about what you ate before you felt bad?

Julie: If you get allergy symptoms soon after eating, you can think about what you just ate. When this happens a few times, you begin to see a pattern - maybe you ate fish each time, or had some dairy food.

Doctors often tell people with possible food allergies to keep a diary of what they ate, and when they got symptoms. That will often show them which foods cause the problems. Then the person can stop eating all of these foods for two weeks and watch to see what happens. If they stop getting the symptoms, the next week they can try eating just one of them to see if that causes problems.

Carol: So Julie, if I had food reactions, and I thought that milk, fish chocolate or strawberries might be causing them, I should stop eating all of those foods for two weeks?

Julie: That's right. I'm sure you would miss the chocolate! If you still get problems, you would have to look for what other food might be causing it. But if you were ok, then you would think: 'Maybe it's fish that's the problem'. So you would try eating fish but not milk, chocolate and strawberries, and see if fish caused a problem. You would try each of these foods, one at a time, until you could find out which one was the cause. It might be more than one, of course.

Tammy: What a pity there isn't just a blood test to show allergies.

Julie: There are some blood tests and skin prick tests that doctors can do. If you have ever had an anaphylactic shock from an allergy, don't ever try that food again. Your doctor will tell you what to do. Remember the symptoms? Your throat and tongue swell up, and you can't breathe. You need help immediately. I would say that if you have *any* food allergy or you can't tolerate *any* food, you should ask your health worker for advice.

Carol: On Women of Hope today we're talking about food allergies. For some people, just being near peanuts or smelling peanuts can cause a severe allergic reaction. They certainly can't kiss someone who has been eating peanut butter!

Tammy: So, how could someone with a severe peanut allergy protect themselves?

Julie: They must be careful *all of the time*. Read labels on packaged food to make sure they do not contain any peanuts or peanut oil. Learn the different names that can be used for peanuts. Often they're called groundnuts. Sometimes they are listed as hydrolysed vegetable protein.

Carol: And if *your* child has an allergy to peanuts, tell teachers, friends, and care givers to make sure your child isn't given any peanuts or peanut products to eat, or anything cooked in peanut oil.

Make sure your child knows what peanuts look like, and that they should not eat them or anything that has peanuts in it.

Julie: Yes, and they should always have the antihistamine medication with them to stop the allergic reaction.

Fish and shellfish can also cause severe allergic reactions. Some people are so allergic to shellfish that they can't even touch them or be nearby when fish are being cooked. *They must carry medication at all times* They should wear a medical alert bracelet or have instructions written out in their pocket, to let people know they have a severe allergy. Many people with severe allergies always carry a syringe that's already loaded with adrenaline, so they can get treatment straight away.

Tammy: I'm sure that if you have any food allergy you must always know what you're eating. You need to check food labels, and ask the cook what's in the food. You shouldn't even use the same cooking utensils that have touched the food you're allergic to. It must be hard to eat out!

Julie: Be very careful to teach your child how to protect himself, too. Explain to him that he should not accept food from anyone who does not know about his allergy. Your child may want to carry some safe food to eat so he will not feel left out when others are eating a food that he's allergic to. If your child has severe allergies, make sure their teacher has the medication ready and knows what to do.

Allergies are serious and you have to make changes to your life. But once you know what to avoid and what to do, you can live a normal, healthy life, so don't give up hope. Just take care!

Carol: Julie's been talking about allergies. Julie, you're from New Zealand, aren't you? Do you remember when the year 2000 started?

Julie: I do! New Zealand was one of the first countries to see the New Year and many people came from other countries to be there. It was very exciting! But I enjoy every New Year - it's always a time of hope. But it also reminds me that time is passing!

Carol: Our friend Marli has come by today; it's so nice to see her again! God gave Marli the idea of Women of Hope, many years ago. Today she's going to talk to us about something important - time!

Marli: Hello! Do you look forward to each New Year's Day? Maybe you have parties or festivals. Or are you're like me? I'm just concerned with getting ready for the next day, the next week, the next month. There are so many important things to be taken care of. We have our work to do. Maybe our family needs lots of time. Maybe aging parents need our help, or friends who have big problems need our attention and love. And always there's that word: *time!*

Time is so precious, isn't it? We have a certain number of days to live, and then this life for us is over...*gone!* My question today is: "How will we *use* this time God has given us?" You know, the way we *use* our time says a great deal about who we are, and about how much we really care for our family and friends. The way we use our time reflects how we think about God, our Creator, and what *he* thinks is important!

In God's word, the Bible, the prophet Moses wrote a prayer...in Psalm 90. He wrote: '*As for the days of our life, 70 years is all we have, 80 years if we are strong... Life is soon over, and we are gone... Lord, teach us how short our lives are, so that we will use them wisely*' (Ps 90 11-12 based on GNB). Moses asked God to remind him that life is short, so he would become *wise!* When you know you don't have much time, you don't want to waste it, and you remember that you will have

to account to God for what you did in this life. The way we spend our days, our hours, is so important!

You know, as I get older, life seems to be *shorter*. Remember when you were a little girl how your mother looked old to you? Now, you are as old as she was then, and now you think that she was not old at all! The thought sometimes hits me: I don't actually have much time left to live. And I don't know whether I will be well, or able to think well. And you know what? Neither do you! Whether we are 9 years old or 90, none of us knows what is going to happen to us tomorrow. No one can say, 'I will be here 2 days or 2 weeks or 2 years from now'. So, we can pray like Moses: 'God, teach me. Teach me how short my life is, so that I will *use* it wisely and *become* wise.'

Here is another question: "What have we done with the days of our lives so far?" I've noticed that sometimes we women simply let time fly away. Or am I the only one? (laugh) We use our days wisely, my friend, when we do worthwhile things; when we love our families, help others, read good books (especially the Bible, which gives us so much wisdom); when we pray and encourage others, and do work that makes our world a better place.

I have a friend who's in her sixties and a widow. She was telling me about the things in her life that she regrets; all the wrong things that she did, all the things she didn't do. The times she should have loved more, worried less, forgiven others instead of letting hurts keep them apart. "So much wasted time", she said. Yes, time is *precious* and we should use it wisely.

Now, let me ask you something: Have you ever thought that today is a *great* day to start the rest of your life? How you can become wise so that this will be the best year of your life...? The Bible tells us that God should be our *first* priority in how we use time. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "Seek *first* the Kingdom of God and the goodness that comes from him, and all these earthly things you need will come to you". (Matthew 6:33) To seek God first, means to spend *time* with him in prayer, reading the Bible, and maybe even listening to Women of Hope or the teaching at church. It means spending your time doing the good things he wants you to do, doing the best you can at your work, sharing his love with others. This is the right way to spend your time; this will help you to learn more about him, and will make you wise.

Are you looking for something spiritual, but you don't know the God of the Bible; the only True God, the Creator of the universe? You know, my friend, God is patient, and he really wants every person to be saved and to live in peace with him and others. But one day this opportunity will be *past!* We will all die. There will be a day when you cannot seek him any more. The Bible says: 'Seek the Lord while you can still find him'. Today, the Holy Spirit of God is calling you to come to him and to give him your time, your heart, and your life. Don't delay! God is calling you today, my friend. Please come to the Lord, and he will fill your life with hope, peace and joy. No matter how bad life is right now, no matter how badly you have lived your life, or how much time you have spent or wasted in the past, he will *forgive* you; he will give you a new life. He will give you time, and a reason to live, because he loves you so much.

Let me pray with you: Dear God, thank you for giving us every day of our lives. Help me to use each moment wisely. I ask you to forgive my past and to take charge of my future. I want to know you and to give you the best of my life. I pray this in Jesus' Name. Amen!

Julie: Weren't those wise words from Marli? You know, I live in Australia now, and on New Year's Eve, 2000, there were wonderful fireworks in Sydney, the biggest city. There's a famous bridge across the harbor, and written in fireworks across the bridge was the single word 'Eternity'.

Carol: Why would they choose that word? It means 'forever', doesn't it? How strange!

Julie: There's a famous true story about a man who lived in Sydney many years ago. Arthur Stace was living a very rough life, when he heard about God's love and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. He realized that *everyone* had to decide whether they would spend all of eternity with God, or not.

Arthur couldn't read or write before that, but he learnt to write that word Eternity in beautiful handwriting. At night he would write it in chalk on the paths and walls of Sydney, to make people think about that question; where will you spend eternity? He did this thousands of times, for many years. No-one knew who wrote it, and people would talk about it. When the organisers of the celebrations wanted a way to show Sydney, and the idea of time, they decided to use that word. People all over Australia and the world watched it on TV, and I hope that many people thought about *time, and eternity*. Because you *can* spend eternity with God if you trust in Jesus Christ and ask God to forgive you and give you new life.

Tammy: What a great story! And now is a good time for us to say goodbye.

Julie: Goodbye and thank you for having me today.

Carol: And God bless you.

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