

Food Challenge Tests When Children Outgrow Allergy

Doctors say some early-childhood food allergies may disappear in time for kindergarten

By Sandra Jordan
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Starting kindergarten marked new beginnings for Joy Haire and her parents, Will and Lisa Haire. Just before the school year started, through a Food Challenge, Joy’s doctor determined she outgrew the serious and potentially life-threatening dairy allergy that surfaced a few weeks before her first birthday.

Food allergy is an immune system response. The body’s

immune system identifies a food protein as dangerous and tries to protect itself by creating antibodies against it and releasing histamines and other substances in the blood.

Common food allergies in children include peanuts, milk, eggs, tree nuts, such as pecans, almonds, cashews and walnuts, and soy and wheat. In adults, peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish (especially shrimp) are the most common foods that cause food allergy, according to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

In Joy’s case, she was taking one antibiotic for a stubborn



A Food Challenge confirmed that Joy Haire outgrew a dairy allergy that put ice cream, milk, cheese and all food that included dairy products off her menu for the first five years.

double ear infection and was prescribed a stronger antibiotic to clear it up.

Thinking back on the incident, Joy’s mother said within 30 minutes after taking the antibiotic and eating Greek yogurt (to prevent stomach upset and diarrhea, as a pharmacist suggested), the allergic reaction began. Joy was a breast-fed baby and had never had dairy products or formula, in addition to taking to a new medication.

“She was restless almost immediately after ingesting the two new substances tossing, turning, hitting and very uncomfortable. All unusual behaviors at the time,” mom Lisa Haire said.

They soon realized they were dealing with much more than a cranky baby.

The Haires were referred to a pediatric allergist, who later confirmed her dairy allergy with a skin test. The Haires went to St. Louis allergist and pediatrician Ray Davis, M.D.

A food allergy and anaphylaxis website provided a list of food ingredients containing dairy in it that may not be as obvious to most people. It was copied for grandparents and caregivers. Everyone read food ingredients. Joy’s mom and dad carried an EpiPen (epinephrine injector) wherever they went and each grandparent’s home had an EpiPen, as well as the preschool she attended.

“You got to get the menu, the food list and find out what type of ingredients. When we sat down, we had to get that before we ordered,” dad Will Haire said. “We’d have to tell the waitress or waiter 900 times that she can’t have anything with milk products and they seemed like they didn’t know what milk products were.”

That wasn’t their entire experience. They found some restaurants who actively work to avoid food allergy reactions in patrons are quite accommodating.

Fortunately, doctors said dairy allergies are usually outgrown by age five, time for kindergarten. When an annual blood test reveals negligible levels immune response to the food protein in question, the child is scheduled for a Food Challenge evaluation.

The Food Challenge, developed at National Jewish Health in Denver, is used by physicians to evaluate whether a child developed immunity to a food allergy.

It takes a few hours to complete the challenge. In Joy’s case, her parents brought in soy yogurt, a food that Joy safely eats. The nurse started by adding small amount of frozen dairy protein powder, which would double in intervals of every 15 minutes, until she has the equivalent to a full serving of milk. She received five doses.

For two full hours after eating, the doctor and nurse monitored Joy’s vital signs for any sign of allergic reaction.

After sustained non-reaction, Dr. Davis determined that Joy no longer had a dairy allergy. The doctor told her parents to give Joy a dairy food three times a week to build up the immunity.

The next day after the challenge, Joy’s first dairy treat she wanted to try was a “pink” ice cream cone, like the ones she would see in some of her favorite children’s books. She loves it – but does not like the taste of dairy milk. Her parents provide rice milk for her to drink at school.

For more information about food allergies and anaphylaxis, visit www.foodallergy.org.

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Oct. 15, 2015 • 9 a.m.- 1 p.m.
7475 SW Oleson Rd., 97223

Bud Clark Commons
Oct. 16, 2015 • 8:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.
665 NW Hoyt St., 97209

African American Health Coalition (Health Fair)
Oct. 17, 2015 • 10 a.m.- 2 p.m.
1333 NE MLK Jr. Blvd., 97202

Wallace Medical Concern
Oct. 24, 2015 • 8:15 a.m.- 4 p.m.
124 NE 181st Ave. #103, 97230

IRCO Senior Center
Oct. 28, 2015 • 9 a.m.- 12 p.m.
10301 NE Glisan St., 97220

SnowCap
Oct. 29, 2015 • 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.
17805 SE Stark St., 97233

IRCO Community Center
Nov. 4, 2015 • 9 a.m.- 12 p.m.
740 SE 106th Ave., 97216

Urban League Senior Center
Nov. 14, 2015 • 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.
5325 NE MLK Blvd., 97211

BEAVERTON
Conestoga Rec & Aquatic Center
Oct. 20, 2015 • 5 p.m.- 7:30 p.m.
9985 SW 125th Ave., 97008

Nature Park Interpretive Center
Oct. 26, 2015 • 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.
15655 SW Millikan Way, 97006

HILLSBORO
Hmong New Year Celebration
Nov. 7, 2015 • 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.
873 NE 34th Ave., 97124

HERMISTON
S.E.A of Health (Health Fair)
Oct. 24, 2015 • 9 a.m.- 1 p.m.
415 S. Hwy 395, 97838

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