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For Better Living
Food Allergies or Just Food Fussiness?

Your child enjoyed her morning snack and 30 minutes later, she's cranky. Her eyes look swollen and she's crying. Does she have a food allergy or is she just being fussy?

Food allergies are a reaction to food that isn't normal. The body's immune system gets confused. Within minutes, or up to 2 hours, it triggers symptoms that may seem like an illness:

- sneezing, runny nose, coughing, difficulty breathing, or wheezing
- itchy skin or eyes, rash, swelling
- nausea, diarrhea, gas, pain or cramps

Most allergic reactions are just uncomfortable. But a small percentage of people have severe reactions that can threaten their lives. Symptoms that seem like allergies may be other serious health problems, too. You will want to find out!

If you suspect a food allergy, have your child checked by your health care provider. That's the only way to know if your child really has a food allergy. If so, being under a doctor's care is essential.

Skip the urge to diagnose an allergy yourself. If you take away a food, such as milk, your child might miss nutrients needed to grow and stay healthy.

About one out of 20 children is allergic to at least one food. There's good news. Except for peanuts and tree nuts, most children outgrow food allergies. Until then, here's what you can do to help your child handle a food allergy and eat healthfully.

- Get help. You can't be an instant expert. Your health care provider can help.
- Avoid offering problem foods. Be aware: foods that cause allergies can be ingredients in mixed foods.
- Find out about food substitutes. You need to know other foods that contain the nutrients your child would miss. Try to create dishes your whole family can enjoy.
- Read the ingredient list on food labels. That's how to tell if a packaged food has the problem ingredient.
- Tell all caregivers. Bring a note from your child's health care provider to the day care center. Tell babysitters, grandparents, other relatives and friends. Explain what foods to avoid and why.
- Order carefully for your child when you eat out. Ask about the ingredients.

- Take food from home. If you're not sure about food at day care, a restaurant, or someone's home, pack food for your child.
- Role-play with your child. Practice what to do when someone who doesn't know about the food allergy offers food to your child.

Source: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service

Oat Berry Squares

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup quick cooking oats
- 2/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 1 jar (10 ozs.) 100% spreadable fruit (cherry, strawberry or raspberry)

In a large bowl, combine the flour, oats, brown sugar, baking soda and salt. Stir in butter. Reserve 3/4 cup for topping. Pat remaining oat mixture into a 9 inch square pan sprayed with nonstick spray. Bake at 350 degrees for 5 - 7 minutes. Spread with fruit spread. Sprinkle with the reserved crumb mixture. Bake 25-30 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack. Yield: 16 servings