

ALLERGY/ASTHMA INFORMATION ASSOCIATION

For more information about egg allergies, contact the Allergy/Asthma Information Association.

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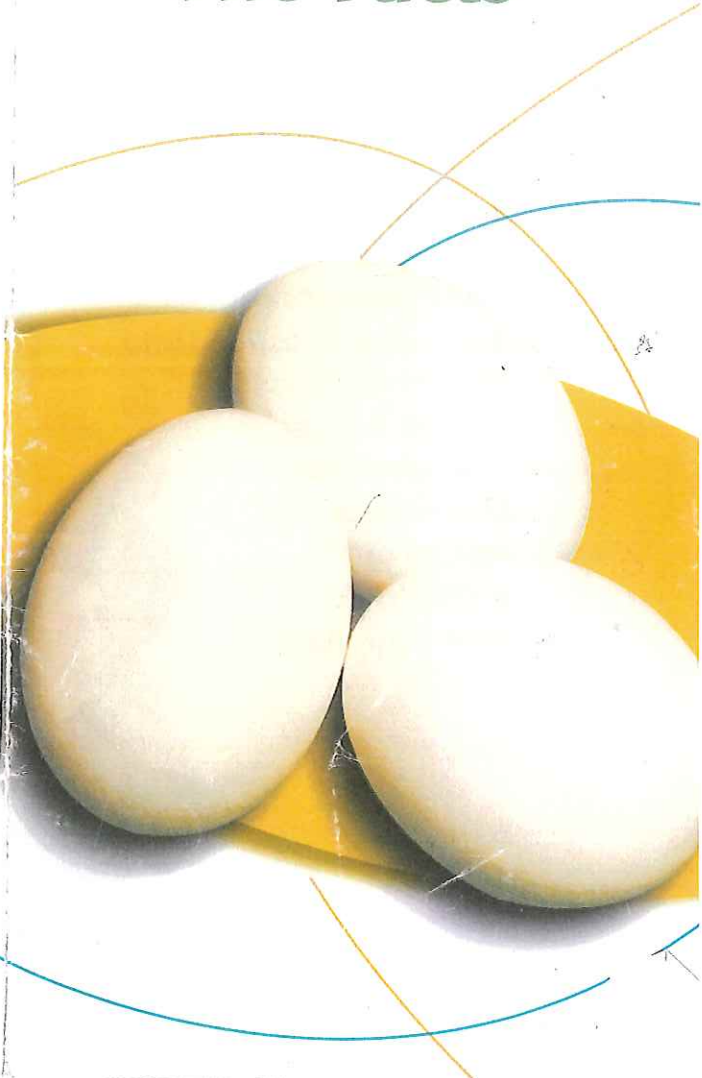
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EGG ALLERGY

The Facts



Allergy to eggs is caused by the immune system's reaction to a protein in eggs. Two factors are necessary for a food allergy to occur – genetic predisposition and exposure to the food. The seriousness of reactions to eggs varies from mild to life-threatening, depending on the person and the amount of egg eaten.

A doctor, preferably an allergist who is a member of the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, is the best person to diagnose the allergy and assess its seriousness. If you or your child has been diagnosed with an egg allergy (either to the white or yolk), the only treatment is to avoid eggs completely. This includes foods and other products containing eggs, as well as foods that may have come in contact with eggs. Check the *Read Labels Carefully!* section of this pamphlet for more information.



BABY'S FIRST TASTE

Doctors and dietitians recommend that babies be breast or formula-fed with no solid foods for the first 6 months of life.

When there is a family history of any food allergy, it is best to ask a doctor or an allergist when to introduce eggs to the baby's diet.

If there is no family history of food allergies, introduce cooked egg yolk at 6 months of age and cooked egg white at about 12 months. This timing takes into account the development of the infant's immune system. Start with 1 small spoon of cooked egg yolk per day. Increase slowly to 3 egg yolks per week. Baby's first birthday is a good time to introduce the whole egg.

If a breast-fed baby is found to have an allergy to eggs, the mother may be advised to stop eating eggs for as long as she breast-feeds.



GIVING EGGS ANOTHER CHANCE

Allergy to eggs is one of the few food allergies that can last a lifetime. Sometimes when the allergy is mild, the doctor may suggest giving the child a very small amount, perhaps in a cooked food which contains eggs, such as a cookie. If this is tolerated, the amount can be slowly and gradually increased starting with a small quantity of hard-cooked egg yolk and later adding egg white (e.g., omelette). Be sure to check with an allergist before trying this.

Fortunately, most children outgrow their allergy to egg by age 5 to 7 years but when it is severe, it can last a lifetime.