

No.1/December 2010

**MEDIA  
PLANET**

# FOOD ALLERGIES



**3**  
TIPS

## LIVING ON HIGH ALERT

**Ming Tsai, chef and owner of Blue Ginger Restaurant,**  
speaks out about why food allergy education is so vital

PHOTO: JANTHONY TIEULI

Research  
The need for  
clinical trial  
patients



Anaphylaxis  
shock  
Are you  
prepared?



The difference  
Allergic versus  
intolerance

## CHALLENGES

Gain a better understanding of differences between food allergy and **food intolerance**, how an allergist/immunologist accurately diagnoses allergies, **useful tips** for managing food allergies and exciting news about research for the treatment of **food allergies**.

TIP

1

FIND AN  
ALLERGIST/  
IMMUNOLOGIST

## Consensus on food allergies

**F**ew allergic conditions generate as spirited discussion as food allergy. From Twitter and blogs to front page news headlines, perceptions are widespread and opinions are passionate. Missing from the dialog is a set of uniform clinical recommendations regarding diagnosis and management of food allergy.

That just changed.

Earlier this month, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) released Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Food Allergy. Those involved in guideline development represent a cross section of clinical communities. In fact, in addition to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), more than 30 other professional organizations, federal agencies and consumer groups collaborated in

this project. The result are uniform standards regarding diagnosing, managing and treating this complex condition that impacts millions of individuals.

The Guidelines and a summary report have been published within The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. This is the official journal of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI).

Accurate information is critical for patients and consumers as well.

Within this Mediaplanet supplement you will gain a better understanding of differences between food allergy and food intolerance, how an allergist/immunologist accurately diagnoses allergies, useful tips for managing food allergies and exciting news about research for the treatment of food allergies.

Also, you can dig deeper into food allergies, learn more about the Guidelines and Find an Aller-



**Mark Ballow, MD, FAAAAI**  
AAAAI President

## ALLERGY CULPRITS

Eight foods are responsible for the majority of allergic reactions:

- Cow's milk
- Eggs
- Fish
- Peanuts
- Shellfish
- Soy
- Tree nuts
- Wheat

gist/Immunologist at [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org). An allergist/immunologist is a pediatrician or internist with at least two years of additional training in the specialty of allergy, asthma and immunology.

On behalf of the more than 6,000 members of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), we wish you a healthy, happy New Year.

*The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology represents allergists, asthma specialists, clinical immunologists, allied health professionals and others with a special interest in the research and treatment of allergic and immunologic diseases. Established in 1943, the AAAAI has nearly 6,500 members in the United States, Canada and 60 other countries. To find an allergist/immunologist in your area, visit [www.aaaai.org/physref](http://www.aaaai.org/physref).*

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ASTHMA & IMMUNOLOGY  
[www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)



## WE RECOMMEND



**Ming Tsai**  
National spokesman for the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network.

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MEDIA  
PLANET

FOOD ALLERGIES, 1ST EDITION  
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## NEWS



## INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT

■ Red River Valley stretches along the North Dakota/ Minnesota border and has been recognized as one of the world's most productive agricultural regions. Red River Commodities was born out of the richness of this region and now plays a leadership role in the industries they serve. Red River Commodities has added unique processes and invested in new and modern facilities and equipment, to attain a higher level of product quality. When processing technology could not provide a desired product for a customer, they turned to genetic hybrid seed research to find positive solutions.

In cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, Red River Commodities began a two-year project to develop a substitute for peanut butter that would be made from sunflower seeds. In the meantime, Red River Commodities invested in new hybrids, specialized production areas, formed SunGold Foods, Inc. and created a peanut-free and tree-nut free environment at both companies. Today, SunButter® is available in a variety of flavors, and is found in grocery chains, health food stores, and many school lunch programs.

*Source: Red River Commodities*

# Intolerance versus allergy

**Eating a food you are intolerant to can leave you feeling miserable. However, if you are allergic to this food, your body's reaction could be life-threatening.**

Some of the symptoms of food intolerance and food allergy are similar, but how your body responds is very different.

## Digestive system versus immune system

Food intolerance takes place in the digestive system. It happens when your body can't break down the food. This can cause stomach pain, cramping, vomiting and diarrhea. Often people with an intolerance can eat small amounts of the food without causing problems.

An allergic reaction involves the

immune system. When you have a food allergy, your body mistakes the food for something harmful and causes the immune system to respond. Symptoms can be similar to those caused by the digestive system. They can also include difficulty breathing, skin irritation or more serious, life-threatening reactions.

An allergic reaction can be triggered by eating just a microscopic amount of the food, or in some cases touching or inhaling the food.

Anaphylaxis (pronounced an-a-fi-LAK-sis) is a serious allergic reaction involving several body systems. Symptoms of anaphylaxis may include difficulty breathing, vomiting and diarrhea, skin rashes and swelling, and dizziness or loss of consciousness. Without immediate treatment—an injection of

epinephrine (adrenalin) and expert care—anaphylaxis can be fatal.

“One of the biggest risk factors for death from anaphylaxis is the lack of use or delayed use of injectable epinephrine early in the food allergic reaction,” according to Stacie M. Jones, MD, professor of pediatrics and chief, allergy/immunology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and Arkansas Children's Hospital.

Accurate diagnosis and management of food allergy are important steps in preventing a life-threatening food allergic reaction. To locate an allergist near you, visit the AAAAI Find an Allergist/Immunologist Directory at [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org).

MARIANNE CANTER AND  
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## INSPIRATION



## DON'T MISS!

## ALLERGIES

**Celebrate the New Year safely**

Toasting the New Year is a tradition that can cause more than a headache the next day. For some people, the festivities may also trigger allergy and asthma symptoms.

Many people let their guard down when celebrating with family and friends. That could have serious or even life-threatening reactions for people with food allergies, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology.

**Plan ahead and communicate clearly to ensure a safe and happy start to the New Year.**

■ If you dine out at a restaurant or someone's home, be sure to check the ingredient used before eating a particular food.

■ If you are highly allergic, remember that any kind of contact with a food could trigger a reaction. Be selective in who you embrace at midnight.

■ Watch your alcohol intake. Drinking can loosen inhibitions and cause you to take risks in eating food that you should avoid.

■ Occasionally, when some people drink alcohol with a meal, they may have an allergic reaction to a food that they normally tolerate, such as shrimp. This doesn't necessarily mean they are now allergic to that food. The reaction may be secondary to other digestive issues caused by the alcohol.

MARIANNE CANTER AND  
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**Question:** Renowned chef Ming Tsai has always been conscientious about food allergies, but why does the issue hit particularly close to home?

**Answer:** His own son suffers from seven of the most common allergies.

# On food allergies: Ming Tsai

It is estimated that nearly 12 million Americans suffer from food allergies. Allergic reactions to food occur when the immune system mistakenly attacks certain proteins in food. The most common allergens, milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soy, can cause mild or severe reactions, anaphylactic shock, and even death.

From the get go, Ming Tsai, chef and owner of Blue Ginger in Wellesley, Massachusetts was conscientious about food allergy awareness in his restaurant. When the restaurant opened thirteen years ago, he instituted a procedure whereby the ingredients of each menu item are detailed, and staff is prepped to make sure patrons know which foods are safe for them to eat. "I always think that if you're going to own a restaurant and serve the public you have to know what's in your food. If you

"I said, 'Look sir, my son has these allergies.' The manager looked right at me and my son and said, 'We'd rather not serve you.' That just infuriated me."



**Ming Tsai**  
Chef and Owner of Blue Ginger  
Restaurant; Wellesley, Massachusetts  
PHOTO: LEANNA CREEL

serve the wrong dish to a peanut allergy kid, that kid can die"

**At work... and at home**

The message really hit home when his son was born with seven of the eight most common food allergies. "Ten years ago, my son was born with allergies to soy, wheat, dairy, shellfish, peanuts, tree nuts and eggs, so he had seven of the eight most common allergies. He had the luxury of having a father that was a chef—not every kid has that obviously."

He speaks of one experience at a Massachusetts restaurant where he alerted the management of his son's allergies: "I said, 'Look sir, my son has these allergies.' The manager looked right at me and my son and said, 'We'd rather not serve you.' That just infuriated me."

Since that time, Tsai has become a spokesman for the Food Allergy

and Anaphylaxis Network, or FAAN, and has worked to push food allergy legislation in the state of Massachusetts. "I partnered with FAAN. I'm their national spokesperson. I'm in a great position to be able to educate, and that's the number one thing that has to get done."

"Anyone should be able to eat safely," he says. "Fortunately now it's happening. We need to educate the public, educate the prep cooks and the dish washers, and the cooks." Care and cleanliness is key. He warns that people, "Figure they can just take the cheese off the burger and bring it back out again. But, molecules can kill. Some people can't walk into Fenway Park because there are peanut molecules in the air. Once people realize that, they realize they can't just brush it off."

AUSTIN KILHAM

editorial@mediaplanet.com

## Be prepared for an allergy emergency

**For people with food allergies, eating even a small amount of a particular food can be life-threatening.**

That is because a sudden allergic reaction called anaphylaxis (pronounced an-a-fi-LAK-sis) can cause difficulty breathing and a drop in blood pressure. If not treated quickly, the results can be fatal.

An anaphylactic reaction is the first time some people sense that they may have a food allergy, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI). An allergist has the specialized training and experience to correctly diagnose food allergy,

develop a management plan and prescribe emergency medications.

**What to look for**

Symptoms of anaphylaxis are severe and most often appear shortly after eating a food - normally in five to 30 minutes, but sometimes as long as a few hours after eating. Symptoms include:

- Hives, itchiness or swelling of the lips and eye lids
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Trouble breathing, shortness of breath or throat tightness
- Dizziness, confusion, drop in blood pressure or loss of consciousness

The best treatment for anaphylaxis is epinephrine, which delivers

a shot of adrenaline.

"If you have ever seen an injection of epinephrine in action, you will be a believer. It works fast and is extremely effective in stopping an anaphylactic reaction" said Amal Assa'ad, MD, professor and clinical director for allergy and immunology at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

Although epinephrine is the gold standard of care for treatment of anaphylaxis, data uncovered in the Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Food Allergy indicate many healthcare professionals don't prescribe it in the appropriate circumstances.

If you experience anaphylaxis

symptoms after eating, use your epinephrine and call 911 immediately. Don't wait to see if symptoms get better or go away on their own.

In addition to food allergies, anaphylaxis can also be triggered in people with allergies to insect stings, drugs or latex.

If you or your child has a history of severe allergic reactions to food or other triggers, download the Anaphylaxis Emergency Action Plan from the AAAAI website at [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org) and ask your doctor to complete it for you.

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NEWS



# Research focuses on treatment

**The only reliable treatment approaches for people with food allergies involve avoiding foods that trigger reactions, and being prepared for a reaction by having quick access to emergency medications.**

With these strict measures, it is no wonder that food allergy is the leading cause of serious allergic reactions among children treated in U.S. emergency departments. It is with good reason that parents with food allergic children are waiting for research that could lead to new treatments and fewer life-threatening reactions.

Traditional Chinese medicine and various forms of immunotherapy are among the treatments being studied. Immunotherapy involves treating a disease by inducing, enhancing, or suppressing an immune response.

ing, enhancing, or suppressing an immune response.

“The concept behind immunotherapy is to slowly retrain the immune system to tolerate the allergens that cause allergic reactions,” says Robert Wood, M.D., director of allergy & immunology at John Hopkins Medical Center.

## New developments

If traditional Chinese medicine proves to be effective, it could be the first treatment available, according to Wood. This is due, in part, because it will be regulated as a supplement, not a drug needing the approval of the Food and Drug Administration.

“The most studied and promising research approach is oral immunotherapy,” says Wesley Burks, MD, chief of pediatric allergy and immunology at Duke University Medical

“The concept behind immunotherapy is to slowly retrain the immune system to tolerate the allergens that cause allergic reactions.”

**Robert Wood, MD**  
Director of Allergy & Immunology,  
John Hopkins Medical Center

Center.

“Oral immunotherapy involves giving a patient a very careful amount of the allergen in gradually increased doses. Over time, this alters the way the immune system responds,” states Burks. “As this occurs, the amount of allergen required to cause a reaction is increased to levels well above those that would be expected by accidentally ingesting the food.”

This process is referred to as desensitization, and trials are currently underway regarding the effectiveness of it as a treatment for food allergies.

Oral immunotherapy is a simple and relatively low cost potential treatment. However, it has risks and Burks cautions that it is not ready for general use. “For now it should remain a treatment used purely for investigation.”

## Hope may be around the corner

The goal for researchers is to develop a way for people with food allergies to build enough tolerance to be able to discontinue therapy. It is not yet clear if this is possible with oral immunotherapy or the other types of treatment under development. Trials with sublingual therapy

(administered under the tongue) and reengineered allergen therapy are not far behind. These offer additional hope that within a few years treatment will be available.

“There is an enormous need for qualified patients to participate in clinical trials of these promising therapies,” notes Todd Slotkin, the father of food-allergic twins and chairman of the Food Allergy Initiative (FAI), a national nonprofit organization that is funding several studies of immunotherapies, including the Chinese medicine. “FAI encourages families to visit our Web site, [www.faiusa.org](http://www.faiusa.org), to learn more about this research and how they can help.”

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