



## Food Challenges in the CAT/CR

- Your child should not eat or drink for 2 hours before the food challenge.
- There are medications that your child may need to stop taking before the food challenge.
- There are things you must bring with you to the food challenge, such as an epinephrine auto-injector.
- If your child is not feeling well on the day of the food challenge, we will have to reschedule the test.

### Contact us

- If your child is not feeling well (has a fever, more allergy/asthma symptoms than usual), call the CAT/CR at 617-355-6235. The food challenge will need to be re-scheduled.
- If you have any other questions, call an allergy nurse at 617-355-6117

### What is a food challenge?

A food challenge is a test used to find out if your child is allergic to a certain food. There are several different types of food challenges. Your child's allergist will tell you which one is best for your child.

- **Open challenge:** Your child will be given the food without disguising its taste or look.
- **Hidden or double-blind placebo challenge:** The food will be hidden in a food your child likes.
- **FPIES (Food Protein-Induced Enterocolitis) challenge:** Your child will be given 1 large sample of the food. After your child eats the food, we will watch them for 3 hours for any reactions.

### Where is the food challenge done?

- The food challenge takes place in Boston Children's Hospital's Center for Ambulatory Treatment and Clinical Research, known as the CAT/CR.
- The CAT/CR is located on Boston Children's Main Campus, 300 Longwood Ave., on the 4th floor of the Farley Building.

### How should I get my child ready for the food challenge?

#### Talk with your child

If appropriate, tell your child in simple words why the challenge is needed and what will happen. For example, you might say, "We're going to the allergy office. You're going to get to eat a little bit of [name of allergen] to see if your body is OK with it." If you are calm and positive about the challenge, your child is more likely to stay positive too.

### Eating and drinking

- **Your child should not eat or drink anything for 2 hours before the challenge.**
- It is helpful if your child is hungry for the challenge.
- Your child will be able to sip water during the challenge, but they cannot eat other foods.

### Medication

**There are medications that your child needs to stop taking before the challenge.**

- ✓ You can give your child daily controller asthma medications (examples: Singulair, Flovent, Pulmicort) as usual.

**DO NOT STOP** giving your child medications except for those below.

- ✗ **2 weeks before the challenge:** Stop giving your child antihistamines, which can interfere with the challenge results. These include:
  - Allegra (fexofenadine)
  - Atarax (hydroxyzine)
  - Claritin (loratadine)
  - Cyproheptadine
  - Xyzal (levocetirizine)
  - Zyrtec (cetirizine)
- Antihistamines are also in many non-prescription cold or allergy medicines, like:
  - Actifed
  - Benadryl (*this can be taken 3 days before the challenge*)
  - Dimetapp
  - Pediacare
  - Tavist
  - Triaminic
- Call 617-355-6117 to speak with an allergy nurse if you are:
  - Unsure of what medicines contain antihistamines
  - Not able to stop a medication, or if your child has symptoms while off a medication.

### What if my child is feeling nervous about the challenge?

You can call 617-355-6117 to schedule an appointment with the Allergy Program psychologist to help your child prepare for the challenge.

## What do I need to bring to this visit?

The visit can take a minimum of 3 hours.

- Please bring small toys, games, tablet/phone or books for your child to use while you are waiting.
- We will provide the food for the test unless you were specifically told to bring the food to the challenge. **If you were told to bring food and you forget to bring it, the test will have to be rescheduled.**
  - **If you are having a baked egg or baked milk challenge**, you will need to bring muffins made with the recipe provided.
- Make sure to bring your child's epinephrine auto-injector. **If you forget your epinephrine auto-injector, your challenge will have to be rescheduled.**

## What if my child is sick before the challenge?

- Your child must not be sick on the day before and the day of the food challenge visit.
- Call the CAT/CR to reschedule at 617-355-6235 if your child has:
  - A fever
  - Diarrhea
  - Rash
  - Viral illness
  - Vomiting (throwing up)
  - More allergy or asthma symptoms than usual

## Who will do the challenge?

- A nurse will do your child's food challenge.
- The allergist is available if there is any concern.
- **Please note: This is not a doctor's visit. You will not see your child's regular allergist.**

## What happens during the challenge?

- 1 You will check in at the front desk when you get to the CAT/CR (Farley 4). **It is important that you are on time for your child's appointment.** If you are late, the challenge may have to be re-scheduled.
- 2 Your child will have their temperature, blood pressure, height and weight measured.
- 3 The nurse will meet with you. The nurse will ask some questions, listen to your child's lungs and look at your child's skin.
- 4 A doctor or nurse practitioner will ask for your consent (agreement) to do the food challenge, and will then examine your child.

- 5 Your child will get increasing amounts of food every 15 minutes until they eat a normal portion or the challenge is stopped because of an allergic reaction.
- 6 A nurse will closely watch your child for signs of a reaction. Your child will be watched after the last dose for 1 hour.

We understand that your child may be uncooperative. **We will not force your child to eat the challenge food.** Your child's allergist will decide what to do if your child is unable to finish the food challenge.

## What if my child has a reaction during the challenge?

- Your child will be watched closely during the challenge by the nurse and nurse practitioner for any signs of a reaction. An allergist will be available in the hospital at all times.
- It is possible that your child will have an allergic reaction, like hives, a rash, throwing up, diarrhea or low blood pressure.
- If your child has a reaction, the nurse will stop the challenge and may give medication, such as the epinephrine auto-injector. Your child will need to be watched in the CAT/CR or the Emergency Department until allergy symptoms resolve. If your child has a serious reaction, your child will be admitted to the hospital for observation.

## What should I do if my child has a reaction at home?

If you're on your way home or at home and your child has an allergic reaction, **such as hives, a rash, vomiting (throwing up), diarrhea or low blood pressure:**

- Give your child the epinephrine auto-injector and call 911 right away.
- Call the Boston Children's page operator at 617-355-6363 and ask to speak to the allergist on call.

## Will my insurance cover a food challenge?

- All insurance companies have different plans and coverage models. We recommend that you call your insurance company for your specific coverage information.
- Please call your insurance company before the challenge to give time for a referral to be processed (if needed).

*This Family Education Sheet is available in Arabic and [Spanish](#).*