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ALL AMERICAN ALLERGIES

Most people would rather not know what goes into those corn dogs they consume at the carnival. But for the 12 million Americans with food allergies, awareness of ingredients allows them to safely eat their way through summer events. State fairs, music festivals and even family picnics are ripe with dangers for those with food allergies. Questions about ingredients, preparation and the

threat of cross-contamination can leave a savvy allergy-avoider uncertain. The stakes are high. A single bite of the wrong food can be enough to trigger a life-threatening reaction in many allergic people. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) estimates that up to 150 people die each year from anaphylaxis caused by food allergy.

In an Emergency...

If you suffer from food allergies, or any severe allergy, always carry self-injectable epinephrine with you. Make sure someone you are with knows how to administer the medicine in case you are unable. Call 911 immediately if you experience symptoms of anaphylaxis, which could include difficulty breathing, light-headedness or swelling in the throat.

In the Oil...

In an effort to eliminate trans-fat from deep fryers, many vendors have switched to peanut oil or soybean oil. Some people with allergies to soy or peanut protein are also unable to tolerate these oils. Check with your allergist/immunologist to learn if you are at risk. At the fair, inquire about ingredients, but also about how foods are prepared.

In the Family...

At picnics, parties and potlucks, make family members aware of your special dietary needs in advance so they can prepare safe food options. If you are still concerned, bring your own food to erase any risk.

Tips To Avoid A Serious Allergic Reaction:

1. Avoid the food: The best way to treat a food allergy is to avoid the specific foods that trigger the allergy.
2. Ask about ingredients: To avoid eating a "hidden" food allergen away from home, food-allergic individuals must always inquire about ingredients when eating at restaurants or others' homes and make the seriousness of their allergy known.
3. Read food labels: It is important for food-allergic people to carefully read food labels. The United States and many other countries have adopted food labeling rules that ensure food allergens are listed in common languages.
4. Be prepared for emergencies: Anaphylactic reactions caused by food allergies can be potentially life-threatening. Those who have experienced an anaphylactic reaction to a food must strictly avoid that food.

Contact an allergist/immunologist for information on diagnosing food allergies or questions about treatment. An allergist/immunologist is the best qualified medical professional to manage the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of allergies and asthma.

