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Title

Feeding the allergic child

Abstract

The allergy-focussed diet history is the cornerstone for the diagnosis and management of food allergy, linking symptoms to foods, assessing nutritional status and planning subsequent testing and dietary management. When taking an allergy-focussed diet history dietitians contribute to the diagnosis of food allergy and intolerance.

Dietary management of food allergy requires an individual approach, taking into account foods to avoid, degree of avoidance, cross-reactivity between inhalant allergens and foods, foods to introduce, suitable substitute foods, promoting taste development and oral-motor skills in infants, prevention of peanut and egg allergy by timely introduction, nutritional adequacy, optimal growth, quality of life and self-management, overall health and wellbeing and prevention of other chronic diseases through the beneficial impact of diet on microbiome and immune system.

Red flags in the management of food allergy are poor growth, persisting symptoms despite intervention measures, picky eating behavior and anxiety, multiple food allergy or long standing elimination diets, as well as unhealthy or unbalanced diets.

A timely diagnosis of cow's milk allergy/food allergy in infancy prevents feeding disorders, anxiety, worsening of symptoms and unnecessary burden for the entire family. In many cases oral food challenge testing is required for a reliable diagnosis.

Children with more severe cases should be referred to allergy specialists allergy centre including an allergy specialist dietitian. Many allergy specialist dietitians are member of the International Network for Diet and Nutrition in Allergy, <https://www.indana-allergynetwork.org>.

key references

Venter C, Groetch M, Netting M, Meyer R. A patient-specific approach to develop an exclusion diet to manage food allergy in infants and children. Clin Exp Allergy. 2018 Feb;48(2):121-137.

Venter C, Laitinen K, Vlieg-Boerstra B. Nutritional aspects in diagnosis and management of food hypersensitivity-the dietitians role. J Allergy (Cairo). 2012;2012:269376. doi: 10.1155/2012/269376.

key messages

Berber is one of the founding members of the International Network for Diet and Nutrition in Allergy, INDANA (www.indana-allergynetwork.org).