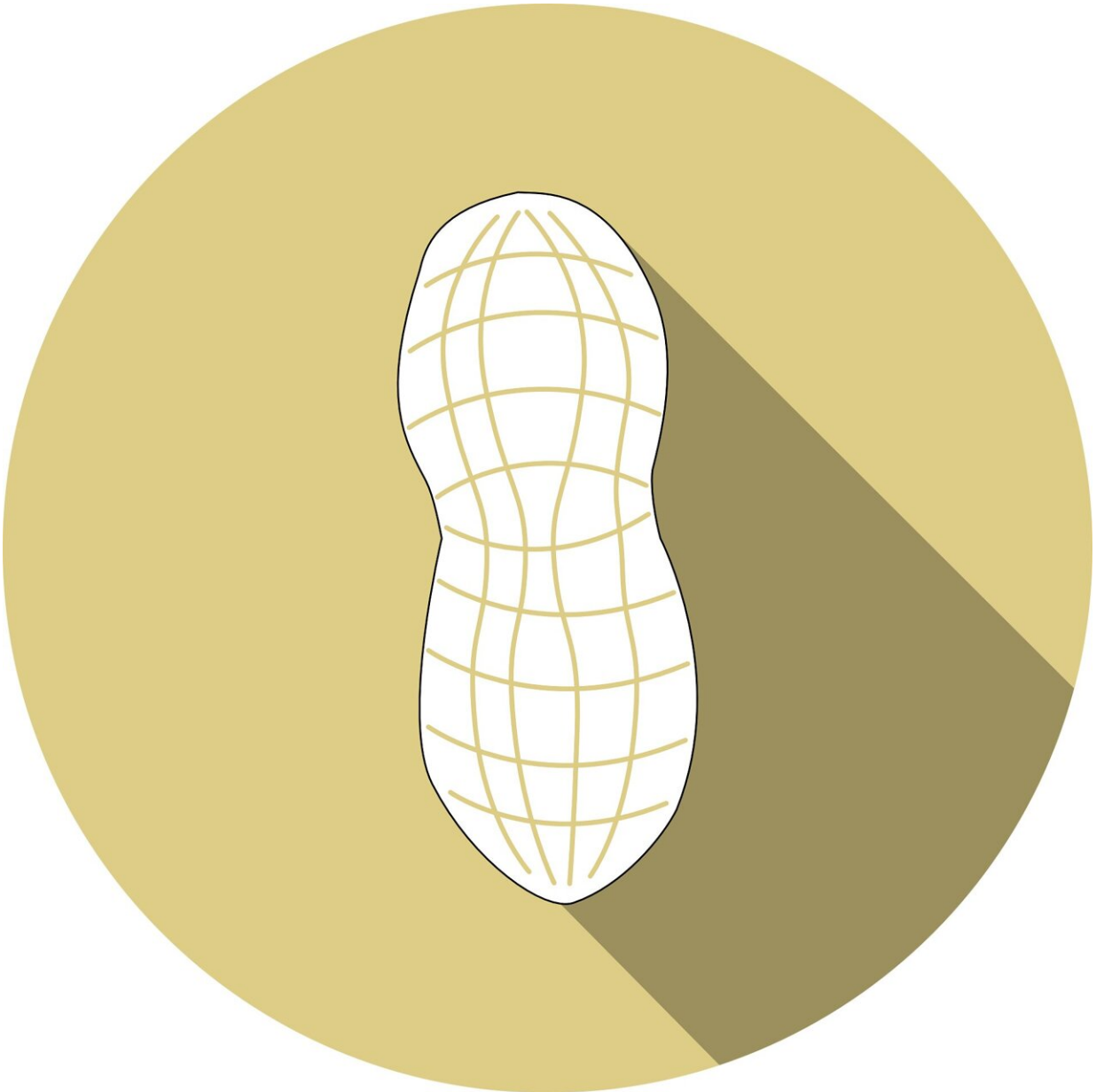


# Six tips to help a friend with food allergies

May 5 2022

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Food allergies are a serious and life-threatening condition that is estimated to affect 4-8% of children and 6-8% of adults in the United States. It occurs when one's immune system reacts to an ingested food. Reactions can range from mild hives to abdominal pain to severe anaphylaxis, which can include itching and swelling of the mouth, tightness of the throat, wheezing and a sudden drop in blood pressure. Anaphylaxis can be fatal, if it is not promptly treated with epinephrine.

The top eight major food allergens are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat and soybeans.

Pediatric allergist and immunologist Victoria Dimitriades suggests six tips to help those with food allergies:

- **1. Ask questions.** Take the time to learn what your friend or loved one is allergic to.
- **2. Avoid sharing food with someone who has known food allergies.** Although we know that kids love to share food, the best way to help a friend or a loved one stay safe is to not introduce other unknown foods into their diet, especially if it hasn't been reviewed by a responsible adult.
- **3. Be a label reader.** The terminology used on some labels can be complicated. If there's an ingredient, a phrase or something else on the label that you don't fully understand, please be sure to pause until you know the answer.
- **4. Wash your hands.** This is a good idea to keep bacteria and viruses away, and it helps reduce [allergy](#) exposure and cross-contamination. Watch out for cross-contamination of appliances and utensils, making sure to wash knives and cutting boards with soap and water between uses.
- **5. Clearly disclose and label allergens.** Make sure your friend

or loved one is aware that there are allergens present in any of their food choices.

- **6. Have a mini action plan in place.** Finally, find out what happens when your friend is exposed to allergens and what kind of medication or treatment he or she needs. Those with serious [food](#) allergies will carry an epinephrine injection with them. Know how to help them administer the injection during an allergic reaction, and be prepared to call 911 and their emergency contacts. One of the best things you can do is to help friends be prepared since every moment counts during an allergic reaction.

Provided by UC Davis

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