

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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If you or someone in your family suffers from food allergies, you are a member of a growing part of our population. Your attention to food has to go a step beyond “What do I feel like eating tonight?” to thinking seriously about all the ingredients in each and every item you put on your plate. Depending on the food you are sensitive to and the severity of the allergy it might be as simple as just avoiding one fruit or vegetable or as complex as reading every fine print food label and sometimes even trying to contact the manufacturer for specific details. There are no cures yet, but what we understand about food allergies is changing.

As with so many other areas of health and nutrition where we just keep learning so much, the recommendations are changing. Now, before you get upset about more changes, just remember that we didn't get from a black Model T to a red SUV in one big jump! It was lots of little changes and new models that got us to where we are today. The same is true in health and nutrition. We just keep on learning, and being an intelligent society, we take what we're learning and make changes. So, here are the new ideas with food allergies.

One aspect of food allergies that is changing rather drastically is how to handle infants in families with histories of allergies. The recently revised guidelines from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases are quite different from previous ‘common knowledge’ ideas. For years grandmothers’ wisdom has been that if a family had a history of food allergies, an expectant mother should avoid many of those foods.

It was thought that if a fetus was exposed to those foods the baby would be more likely to develop the same allergies.

The same 'wisdom' told us that in general, and especially in families with food allergies, babies should not be fed any peanuts, peanut butter or any foods that contained peanuts before they were 3 years old, or at the very earliest 2 years old. The theory was that if babies were fed these foods before their stomachs were developed enough to do a full job of digesting them, their bodies would react by creating allergies. But that's not what is happening. Here are the new recommendations.

NO changes or limits are recommended for mothers' diets while they're pregnant. There is no evidence that limiting what Mom eats helps the baby, and there is some evidence that if Mother eats a wider variety of foods the baby will be able to both tolerate and like a wider variety too.

As for babies, they should start getting solid foods between 4 and 6 months of age. There's no good evidence that keeping them on formula, or that only giving them a very restricted list of foods, will help prevent allergies. In fact, it now seems that by giving more foods *by mouth* earlier in life, the babies are better able to handle them and do not develop allergies. For example, babies who are given peanut-containing foods when they're only 6 months old have fewer allergies to peanuts than those who don't get the foods until they're over a year old. One thought on why this is true is that when babies get the food in their stomach, their bodies know how to handle it. But if their first contacts with the food are on their skin or by breathing bits of it, then it's treated as a foreign invader and allergies develop. So putting the peanut butter in baby's mouth, before they get exposed to big brother's peanut butter sandwich, may prevent allergies.

Of course, if a child has been diagnosed by a doctor with specific food allergies, those foods should be avoided until testing by the doctor shows that they've outgrown the allergy. Thankfully, most children do outgrow their childhood allergies.

Here's a cheesy zucchini side dish that's light and fluffy, a pretty presentation for dinner. If you have leftovers the soufflé will collapse, it will only be half as tall. But it will still taste great reheated the next day.

Zucchini Soufflé

4-5 cups shredded zucchini (about 1 ½ pounds)	1 T salt
¼ cup baking mix	4 eggs (¾ C egg substitute)
¼ C chopped fresh green pepper or parsley	Garlic powder to taste
1 C shredded Cheddar cheese (4 oz) low fat	salt, pepper to taste

Sliced black olives or crumbled cooked bacon, optional

Mix shredded zucchini and salt in bowl and let stand 30 minutes. Transfer to colander and drain very well. Press out extra juice. Preheat oven to 375°F. Combine baking mix, eggs, pepper or parsley, salt, pepper and garlic powder in bowl and mix well. Stir in drained zucchini and cheese. Spoon into greased 2 quart baking dish. Sprinkle with olives or bacon crumbles for garnish. Bake 30 minutes or until set. Serve immediately.

Serves 6.