


# Living with food allergies

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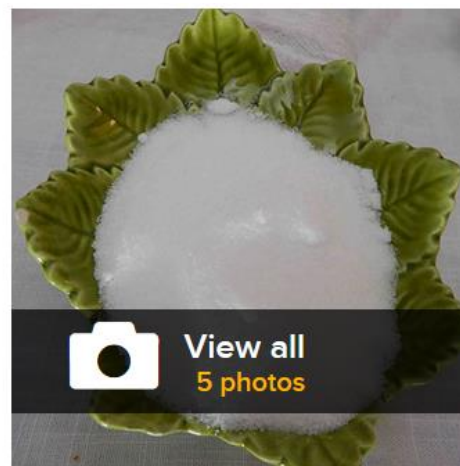


A conversation with a professional friend reminded me how little most people know about living with [allergies](#). She asked pediatricians for information because her children were allergy-free. I go to my files because my children were allergic.

Food allergies come in many forms. They begin for some infants almost at birth, resulting in diaper changes that can be very smelly and visually painful for the changer.

Our son's allergy problems began when he no longer wanted breast milk. Common formulas upset his system and we finally found something he could tolerate after a lot of experimentation and visits to the pediatrician's office. I wanted to review its ingredients to write this article, but the product seems no longer to be available.

Back when my son was born, I had not yet learned to read ingredients for every prepared item we put in our mouths.



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## Testing everyone

My pediatrician referred me to another doctor at the University of Miami, Dr. Douglas Sandburg (now retired), who tested our whole family. My assumptions for all of us were dead-on right.

Thus began a long journey of teaching myself how to use only fresh ingredients and to cook from scratch. I worked hard to keep chemicals and preservatives, sugar, and food coloring out of our food. That is a lot easier now. I learned to use my canning skills to make what I could not buy. Recently I found and opened a jar of blueberry jelly made more than two decades ago when my children were little. It was still good to eat.

Allergies meant many discussions with fellow parents and my children's teachers. All through my children's education, questions were raised and I searched for answers. I quickly learned about and joined the Allergy/Asthma Information Association (AAIA) in Canada and bought every one of their publications I thought might help. I was very much alone in my efforts except for conversations with other mothers in Sandburg's office and his willingness to let me read medical journals during office visits.

**Human Ecology Action League (HEAL)**, the second group I found, still exists. It has a large **Atlanta** chapter. HEAL continues to publish valuable information.

HEAL's Web site states the following areas of interest:

- Are you sensitive to your environment?
- Are you concerned about making your environment as healthy as possible for you and your children?
- Do you or your children suffer from allergies, asthma, chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), fibromyalgia, food intolerances, multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS), and more?
- Have you gone from doctor to doctor in search of relief? Have doctors (and others) told you that your problems are "all in your head?"
- Are you tired of spending hours and hours on the Internet looking for needed information?

If these problems affect you or a family member, you should join.

### **Taking extra time**

Having children and family members with allergies means hours of research and food preparation, and extra time searching for edible foods. We did not use chocolate, color sprinkles on pastries, Gatorade, Hi-C, Jell-O, Kool Aide, sodas, or many other products common in American homes. I tried not to use the same foods every day, and had us on a quasi-rotation diet.

I will never forget the story I was told about a little boy in Miami who wanted orange juice all the time and was a behavior problem. He craved the very thing that made him sick.

Each of my family members had slightly different allergies. I was challenged at every meal to feed my family. Parties were a terrible problem.

Going through my professional library, I found three fairly recent books on allergies, and just this week I received a new one.

Carol Fenster, *Wheat-Free Recipes and Menus*, 2004 (Penguin Group, New York) is 267 pages with 250 recipes. It's a one-issue allergy book – gluten-free. [Gluten-free products](#) are now very common in the marketplace. If you can find a copy of this book, read the recipes very carefully if you have gluten and other allergy issues.

Janice Voiclerstaff Joneja, *Dealing with Food Allergies, a Practical Guide to Detecting Culprit Foods and Eating a Healthy, Enjoyable Diet*, 2003 (Bell Publishing Company, Boulder, Colorado), 484 pages. Joneja discusses all the common allergy issues, including egg, fish and shellfish, milk, peanut, soy, wheat and grain; less common, including nickel; the chemical and color issues; and preservatives – all with big words that are impossible to say or spell.

She finished the chapters on these allergies with one on one of my favorites, monosodium glutamate (MSG), which used to lurk everywhere and still is far too common in canned and prepared packaged foods. Her list is extensive but by no means encyclopedic.

Nut issues are not limited to just peanuts, which are bothersome to so many children. Walnuts, almonds, cashews, and pistachios all potentially could cause problems. I personally can't eat or even be anywhere near pistachios.

Theresa Willingham, *Food Allergy Field Guide: A Lifestyle Manual for Families*, 2000 (Savory Palate, Littleton, Colorado), 279 pages. The book comes with four plastic substitute charts: Baking with Dairy Substitutes, Baking with Egg Substitutes, Baking with Alternative Sweeteners, and Baking with Wheat Substitutes. Most of the book deals with discussions. Some recipes using Willingham's suggestions are in the back.

When you look at these older books and others on the shelves of your bookstore or public library, read them carefully before trying the recipes. The same is true for any cookbook you may own.

### **What's New**

The latest addition to my allergy book library is:

→ Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., *The Complete Guide to Beating Sugar Addiction*, 2015 (Fairwinds Press, Beverly, MA.) Early editions were published 2010 and 2012. This is another one-issue book, covering a topic that has been written about for decades.

The case for sugar being addictive is hampered by the fact that it's a legal food, and by the power of the domestic and foreign sugar industries. Teitelbaum describes multiple types of sugar addictions and the sugar substitutes, including high-fructose corn syrup (known to be bad for people), and erythritol, sugar alcohols, and Stevia (all of which have issues). The chemical sweeteners including saccharin, sucralose, and aspartame also have issues; one is left wondering why the U.S. Food and Drug Administration ever approved them.

The book contains 40 sugar-fighting recipes. If you try one, make sure it doesn't cause other allergy issues.

When you look at these books and others on your shelves, in your bookstore, or at the public library, read them carefully before trying the recipes.