Food allergies affect as many as 32 million Americans, including 6 million children. Studies report that 1 in 13 children and up to 1 in 10 adults in the United States have a food allergy. For children, this averages to two children per classroom.

A food allergy is an immune system response to a food that the body mistakenly believes is harmful.

Nine foods account for 90% of all food allergy reactions: Peanuts, Tree nuts, Milk, Egg, Wheat, Soy, Fish, Shellfish, and Sesame. However, almost any food can cause a reaction.

There is no cure for food allergies and strict avoidance is the only way to prevent an allergic reaction.

Trace amounts of an allergen can trigger an allergic reaction in some individuals. Past reactions to a food allergy do not predict future reactions! Someone can still have a life-threatening reaction to a food they are allergic to, even if they have never had a serious reaction before.

Symptoms can develop rapidly after exposure to an allergen, often within minutes and usually within 30 minutes. However, it can take up to 2 hours for symptoms to occur after exposure to a food allergen.

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that comes on quickly and has the potential to become life-threatening. Anaphylaxis requires immediate medical treatment, including an injection of epinephrine and a visit to the emergency room.

It is important to be deliberate and not hesitate when you have to use epinephrine. The device is potentially life-saving. A call to 9-1-1 and a trip to the emergency room should always follow epinephrine administration.

Individuals at risk should carry two epinephrine auto-injectable devices with them at all times AND an Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Action Plan signed by a board-certified allergist.

Food allergies continue to rise and are a safety and public health concern across the United States. You can get free resources and find out how to help keep those with food allergies safe at:

www.FoodAllergyAwareness.org