

Travelling with an allergic child

Introduction

Travelling with children is a wonderful experience but it can be stressful! If you have a child with allergies, this adds another element of anxiety.

Happily, with some well-thought out planning, family travel can truly be enjoyed by all.



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Before your vacation

1. Be prepared – bring your essential medications

- Make sure you have enough medication to last the duration of your trip, and a letter allowing you to carry your child's medication on board the airplane.
- It would be a good idea to have a list of local clinics or hospitals in your travel destination, so that you will know where to go in the event that your child requires medical attention.
- Ask your doctor to prepare a letter, indicating your child's allergy and the need to carry their medicine with you all the time, even during flights.
- A small travel pouch with medications can be prepared with medications that need to be taken while on-the-go : for example, antihistamines, travel-size moisturiser, inhalers (Ventolin and inhaled corticosteroid controllers) and Epinephrine auto-injector (Epipen).
- For children with eczema, remember to pack their soap-free shower gels or bath ointments, and shampoo.



2. Ensure that you are covered in the event that you require medical assistance

- Be sure to get travel insurance that will cover medical assistance if needed – keep emergency contact telephone numbers at hand.

3. Minimise environmental triggers in your hotel or accommodation

- Book a non-smoking room, and ask for a pet-free room if you are allergic to animal dander.
- For children with house dust mite allergies, bringing your own pillowcases and pillows can help to decrease exposure to house dust mites in hotels, especially if you already have dust-mite proof covers. Old hotels often have more house dust mites so it may be helpful to try to book accommodation in a newer hotel if your budget and planning allows this.

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4. Some tips for children with food allergies

- For food allergies, some planning ahead will save you from a lot of headaches and stress!
- Restaurants in developing countries or rural areas may be less familiar with the precautions necessary for a child with food allergies (particularly the risks of cross contamination, and minute amounts of allergens in sauces, oils and condiments). If possible, it may be useful to stay in a room equipped with a kitchenette or at least a refrigerator and a microwave; so that you can prepare your own food especially for younger children.
- Ask for recommendations from others who have travelled there – especially those with food allergies.
- Fill out a food allergy card (also known as a chef card) listing the foods that your child is allergic to – with a translation of the terms in the local language; that you can pass to restaurant staff. (A laminated piece of paper is easy to carry and will hold up well when travelling). Remember though that a card is no substitute for direct communication – and speak directly to your waiter about your child's food allergies.



When in transit

Always carry your child's own epinephrine auto-injectors such as EpiPen and other emergency medications. Be sure that everything you pack is in original containers, in case you have difficulty with airport security; as well as your doctor's letter. You may need to pack liquids or creams such as moisturisers into smaller containers to comply with airline requirements (100ml containers should be accepted).

For children with food allergies, alert your airline ahead of time to request for an allergen-free menu. Some airlines may agree to not serve peanut or tree nut snacks to adjacent rows, due to the risk of aerolisation (particles in the air). When you arrive at your seat, use a wet wipe to wipe the trays and armrests to ensure that any food residue present is removed.

Bring snacks and food for your child, in case there is any problem with the allergen-free menu that has been booked.



At your destination

Remember to continue your child's usual treatment. It can be tricky to remember to take medication when a normal routine is disrupted – try linking medication to a daily activity eg.

Get your child to take his inhaler right after brushing his teeth, and continue this when on holiday.

Always remember to check labels carefully – in many countries, ingredient labels must include commonly allergenic foods, even if in small amounts but not all countries have such laws. If in doubt, it may be better to avoid snacks and pre-cooked food.

If you need to buy anti-allergy drugs, remember that in most countries they are over-the-counter medications (you can buy them without prescription). Remember to check the active ingredient of your medication as the brand name can be different in foreign countries.

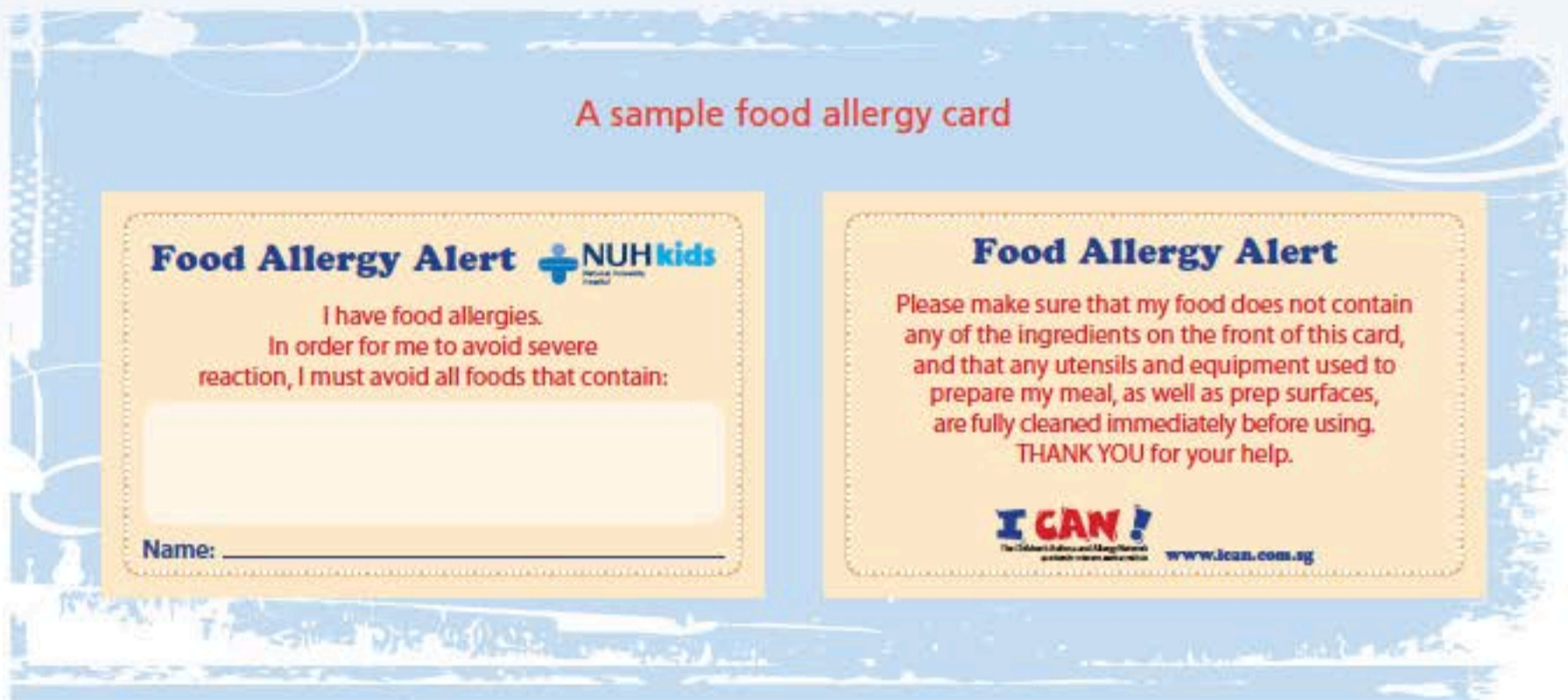
“ Lastly and most importantly, enjoy yourself! ”

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Appendices :

1. Sample food allergy card
2. Suggested packing list for travelling with an allergic child
3. Useful websites

A sample food allergy card



A suggested packing list

Medication	Documents	Allergen avoidance
Antihistamines Inhalers - Ventolin rescuers and preventers Epinephrine autoinjector Moisturisers and topical steroids	Doctor's letter Food allergy card Eczema or asthma action plan Contact numbers for local doctor and travel insurance	Pillow-case and house-dust mite covers Soap-free cleanser and shampoo (for eczema) Snacks and food (if allergen free menu delayed or not available)

Useful websites :

1. For useful tips on travelling with food allergy
<http://www.allergyuk.org/general-avoidance/travelling-abroad-with-a-food-allergy>
2. The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy travel plan for patients at risk of severe reaction (anaphylaxis)
<http://www.allergy.org.au/health-professionals/anaphylaxis-resources/ascia-travel-plan-anaphylaxis?highlight=WyJ0cmF2ZWwiXQ>
3. Travelling with eczema
<http://www.thestar.com.my/Lifestyle/Health/2014/05/04/An-itch-during-vacation-Keeping-eczema-at-bay/>