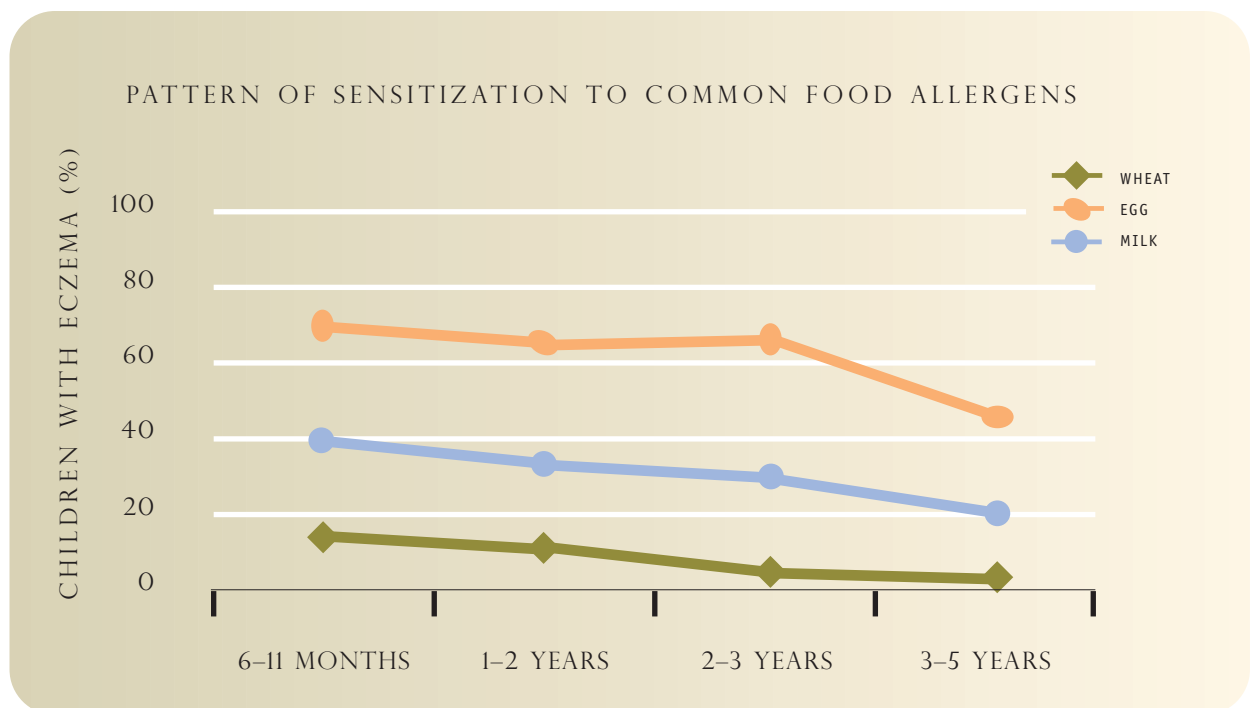


wheat allergy

How common is wheat allergy?

WHEAT IS OFTEN LISTED AS A COMMON FOOD ALLERGEN. ALTHOUGH WHEAT REACTIONS OCCUR IN BABIES, TRUE ALLERGIES ARE VERY UNCOMMON.



Over the years there have only been a few children who have had a severe reaction to wheat and none have ever needed adrenaline for resuscitation. As you can see from the graph, it is quite uncommon to even have a positive skin test to wheat. Because it is such a weak allergen clinical reactions fade quite early in the second year of life.

What sorts of problems are associated with wheat?

Non-allergic reactions to wheat

— are not that common in early childhood and tend to disappear in all but the most sensitive children during the school years. The children in whom this type of reaction is likely to be a problem are those who are unable to tolerate cow's milk and soy during infancy (this is the period up to a year of age). The reactions to wheat include sleep disturbance, irritable behaviour, reflux, frequent loose stools, constipation, upper airway congestion and non-specific skin rashes. There is usually a family history of irritable bowel in children who react to wheat.

	Tolerance at 1 year (%, n=83)	Tolerance at 2 years (%, n=56)	Tolerance at 3 years (%, n=40)	Tolerance at 5 years (%, n=29)	Tolerance at 7 years (%, n=12)
Wheat	13	38	30	54	75
Cow's milk	1	11	18	21	50
Soy	0	14	18	27*	17*

TABLE 2 An intolerance to wheat is common in children with non-allergic reactions to cow's milk and soy formula in the first year of life.

* Once children tolerated milk, soy was not tested.

Children who react to wheat often react to other grains and cereals as they can to many foods. The reactions to the other grains are also dose-related. In general the non-gluten cereals such as rice and amaranth are well tolerated. Tolerance to buckwheat is highly variable. Rye and oats may be tolerated better than wheat.

Adverse reactions to gluten have been implicated in autism. Using the RPA elimination diet and challenge protocol to investigate diet in children with this disorder the pattern of food reactions in those with food intolerance is no different than it is in those without autism.

Coeliac disease

— is a type of autoimmune disease where the gluten component of wheat causes a reaction that damages the lining of the bowel wall especially in the upper small intestine. Children are particularly susceptible to malnutrition as a result of the damage and present with abdominal distension, weight loss and muscle wasting.

In coeliac disease the sensitivity to gluten is exquisite, the dietary restrictions are exacting and need to be followed for life. Much of the attention to traces of wheat in products is due to the needs of those with coeliac disease.

WHEAT ALLERGY

precautions

Wheat cereals, wheat bran and products such as pasta, cakes and biscuits made from flour that is milled from wheat should be avoided.

Because the allergy is rarely severe, extreme measures like those for peanut and nut allergies in the home and care environment are not necessary to control the allergy symptoms.

Because of labeling for coeliac disease *wheat-free* products are easy to identify.

Wheat may be overlooked in:

Confectionery	Sauces
Gravies	Soups
Sausages or processed meats	Starch
Natural flavourings	Soy sauce
Hydrolyzed vegetable protein (HVP)	

Substitutions

Nutrition

Wheat and products made from wheat form a significant part of the daily diet of most Australian children. Removing wheat can leave the diet low in calories until ways of filling up on other nutritious foods are found.

Apart from providing energy, wheat is an important source of protein, B vitamins and minerals. Wheat is often the base for other important dietary components such as breakfast cereal is eaten with milk, toast with butter and spreads and pastas with vegetable sauces

Rice is not an adequate substitute on its own for wheat. This is why non-gluten cereals such as amaranth and buckwheat should be considered. Extra meat, lentils and kidney beans added to the rice can substitute.



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Shopping

Refer to the elimination diet shopping list for gluten-free products that substitute for bread, breakfast cereals and noodles.

Cooking

Nothing quite replaces gluten in cooking. In some ways it is better not to expect the substitute to be the same.

In baking a mixture of flours works best. It is important to substitute by weight and not by volume to create an acceptable substitute.

It may take 6 or more efforts cooking a gluten-free recipe to get it right. To make gluten-free flours rise better, mix baking powder or soda with water before adding it to the dry ingredients.

ORGRAN® make a flour and a bread mix that are wheat, egg and milk free. (Most bread mixes have eggs and/or milk in them)

Children who are allergic to wheat tend to develop allergies to a lot of foods. On rare occasions these children have developed allergies to xanthan or guar gum that are used to give texture to gluten-free flours.

FOR CAKES

—teaspoon of xanthan gum per 1 cup of gluten-free flour

FOR BREADS

—1 teaspoon xanthan gum per 1 cup of gluten-free flour

FOR PIZZA CRUSTS

—2 teaspoons xanthan gum per 1 cup of gluten-free flour.

