



Consumer Focus

► by **Katie Reim**, communications specialist

Could you have a food allergy?

Many adults believe they suffer from food allergies, but what exactly is a food allergy and how do you know if you have one?

Immune system response

Janice Hermann, Oklahoma State University (OSU) Cooperative Extension Service nutrition education specialist, says a food allergy is an adverse reaction to a food or food component that involves the immune system.

“About one-third of all adults believe they have a food allergy; however, true food allergies affect less than 2% of the total population,” she says. “Approximately 5% of young children are diagnosed with food allergies. Most childhood food allergies appear early in life and are usually outgrown.”

Allergies happen when an individual eats a food to which they are allergic. The food allergen stimulates the immune system to release antibodies. These antibodies then

cause body cells to release substances that cause allergic reactions. Usually the allergens in foods are proteins, not carbohydrates, fats, vitamins or minerals.

Hermann says food allergies can happen with almost any food. Yet, a limited number of foods such as milk, eggs, wheat, fish, shellfish, soy, peanuts and tree nuts, such as walnuts, cause most allergic reactions.

“Allergic reactions happen usually within minutes to a few hours after eating an offending food,” she explains. “In very sensitive people, even smelling or touching the offending food may produce an allergic reaction. Food allergy reactions vary from person to person.”

The same food can produce completely different symptoms in different people, as

well as varying symptoms within the same person.

Hermann says food allergy symptoms usually fall into three areas:

- Skin reactions — swelling of lips, mouth, tongue, face or throat; hives, rashes, itching and skin redness.
- Nose, throat and lung reactions — sneezing, nasal congestion, runny nose, chronic cough, shortness of breath or other breathing difficulties.
- Stomach and intestinal reactions — nausea, abdominal pain and bloating, vomiting, diarrhea, cramping and gas.

“It’s important to have food allergies properly diagnosed,” Hermann says. “Elimination tests and food challenges for diagnosing suspected food allergies need to be performed only under medical supervision.”



Editor’s Note: *Katie Reim is a communications specialist for Oklahoma State University’s Agricultural Communications Services in Stillwater, Okla.*

Recipe of the Month: East Meets West Burgers

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. ground beef* (95% lean)
- ¼ cup soft whole wheat bread crumbs
- 1 large egg white
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ⅛ tsp. black pepper
- 4 whole-wheat hamburger buns, split

Sesame-Soy Mayonnaise:

- ¼ cup light mayonnaise
- 1 Tbs. thinly sliced green onion, green part only
- ½ tsp. soy sauce
- ¼ tsp. dark sesame oil
- ⅛ tsp. ground red pepper

Slaw Topping:

- ½ cup romaine lettuce, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup shredded red cabbage
- ¼ cup shredded carrot
- 1 tsp. rice vinegar
- 1 tsp. vegetable oil
- ¼ tsp. black pepper

Instructions:

1. Combine Sesame-Soy Mayonnaise ingredients in small bowl; refrigerate until ready to use.
2. Combine Slaw Topping ingredients in small bowl, set aside.



3. Combine ground beef, bread crumbs, egg white, salt and ⅛ tsp. black pepper in large bowl, mixing lightly but thoroughly. Lightly shape into four ½-in.-thick patties.
4. Place patties on grill over medium ash-covered coals. Grill, covered, 11 to 13 minutes (over medium heat on preheated gas grill, covered, 7 to 8 minutes),

turning occasionally, until instant-read thermometer inserted horizontally into center registers (160° F). About 2 minutes before burgers are done, place buns, cut sides down, on grill. Grill until lightly toasted.

5. Spread equal amount of mayonnaise on bottom of each bun, top with burger. Evenly divide Slaw Topping over burgers. Close sandwiches.

Serves 4

Cook’s Tip: *To make soft bread crumbs, place torn bread in food processor or blender container. Cover; process, pulsing on and off, to form fine crumbs. One and one-half slices makes about 1 cup of crumbs.*

Nutrition information per serving: 348 calories; 15 g fat (4 g saturated fat; 3 g monounsaturated fat); 70 mg cholesterol; 621 mg sodium; 26 g carbohydrate; 3.9 g fiber; 28 g protein; 6.9 mg niacin; 0.5 mg vitamin B₆; 2.1 mcg vitamin B₁₂; 3.8 mg iron; 41.9 mcg selenium; 6.4 mg zinc.

*The *Angus Journal* suggests using *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®).

For more tasty beef dishes, visit www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com.