**Preparing for a Food Challenge**

An oral food challenge or feeding test is the most reliable method for food allergy diagnosis. A food challenge evaluates whether a food allergy has been outgrown or to figure out whether someone truly has a food allergy when the history and allergy test results are unclear. Food challenge visits are very involved, so please read this handout carefully.

**What is a food challenge?**

An oral food challenge is a medical procedure in which a food is eaten in gradually increasing doses under medical supervision.

**How long is a food challenge visit?**

Plan to stay between 3 and 6 hours in the office; average is about 4 hours. Your stay may be longer or shorter, depending on history, type of food allergy, and what happens during the challenge. If your child has no symptoms, we will monitor your child in our office for 1-2 hours after the last dose. In children with a history of FPIES, plan to stay 2-6 hours after eating the food for observation. If your child has a reaction during the challenge, monitoring times will vary. If a reaction requires treatment with epinephrine, we will monitor your child for several hours after the administration of epinephrine. If a reaction is significant or severe, there is a small chance that we will transfer your child to an emergency room, or he/she will be hospitalized for further monitoring or additional medications. Please have a back-up plan in place in case you need to stay all day.

**How to prepare for a food challenge**

Your child must be well on the day of the challenge. Please call the office to discuss any symptoms of illness, asthma, or allergy. We may need to reschedule a food challenge if:

* Your child is sick the week of the challenge (e.g., fever, infection, or antibiotics).
* Your child has poorly controlled or worsening of asthma, eczema, or nasal allergy symptoms the week of the challenge, (e.g., using rescue inhaler within 2-3 days before the challenge, having to blow nose constantly, or active flare of eczema.)

**Medication guidelines**

* Stop all antihistamines 3-10 days before the challenge as directed by your doctor. Other medications may be discontinued per your doctor’s instructions.
* Continue all asthma steroid preventative inhalers and nasal steroid sprays (e.g., fluticasone, budesonide, beclomethasone, flunisolide, mometasone, ciclesonide, triamcinolone). If your asthma preventative inhaler has salmeterol or formoterol in it, do not use this inhaler 8 hours before the challenge.
* Do not use a rescue inhaler (albuterol, Xopenex) preventively (e.g., before exercise to prevent symptoms) 8 hours before the challenge. Please always use a rescue inhaler for asthma symptoms if needed and then let the office know you used the medication and why it was given.
* **Never avoid treating allergy or asthma symptoms with rescue medications because a food challenge is approaching**. If you/your child needs to use a rescue inhaler, an antihistamine, or even epinephrine, please use the medicine and then call the office to discuss the symptoms in case the challenge should be postponed.

If you have a question about a specific medication, please contact the office.

**Eating before the food challenge**

Your child should not have anything to eat for at least 4 hours before the challenge. Infants and young children may be fed a light meal 2 hours before the challenge.

**What to bring to the food challenge**

Please refer to the provided list of foods typically used during an oral food challenge.

* It is recommended that you bring at least 2 different servings of the food to be challenged.
* Bring your child’s epinephrine autoinjector twin pack to the visit.
* Bring something to entertain yourself and your child during the visit.
* Bring an extra pair of clothes for your child (and an extra shirt for yourself) in case your child has any vomiting

**Special considerations for children**

Prepare your child for the food challenge by explaining the procedure to them. The language you use can give your child necessary information without overwhelming him or her. Tell your child that he or she will have an oral food challenge to see whether he or she is allergic to the food. Tell him or her that the food will be eaten at the doctor’s office, and doctors and nurses will be at the challenge to keep them safe. Emphasize that your child can bring games and

fun activities to the challenge.

For young children or picky eaters, it is helpful to bring several forms of the food (e.g., cow’s milk and cow’s milk yogurt).

Bring anything that may make it easier for your child to eat a new food (e.g., favorite plates, cups, spoons, prizes, etc.).

**Who to call**

A food challenge is an important part of a food allergy evaluation. If you have any questions or concerns about the procedure, please call **214-456-2084 (Dallas) or 469-497-2504 (Plano).**

Because there is a substantial waiting list for food challenges, please take care in scheduling the food challenge appointment and inform the office as soon as possible if you need to reschedule.