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Diagnosis of food allergy in babies: A real-life story

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Food allergies in babies are underdiagnosed. The purpose of this video presentation is to describe my experience of seeking help as a parent of a baby with food allergies. My daughter had 6 food allergies, some of which were present from birth and some which were not evident until she started on solid foods. She was exclusively breastfed until 6 months and we identified that she had cow's milk protein allergy at just 4 weeks old with the help of a breastfeeding peer supporter. It took until 14 months of age to get a formal diagnosis of all of her allergies. During this time, we saw several GPs and a pediatrician. None of them recognized the signs of food allergies in babies, despite the fact that she already had an existing food allergy. As a result, I had to undertake an exclusion diet without medical support in order to resolve her symptoms. It was only after doing this that she was referred to a pediatrician and dietician for proper diagnosis and support. This was a very stressful time for the whole family. We were caring for our sick baby whilst also looking after our older daughter. We had very little sleep as our baby frequently suffered with stomach pains in the night. This had an impact on our mental health. It was very demoralizing to ask for help from medical professionals and be turned away. We did not know why our baby was suffering. We had to focus our efforts on managing her symptoms. If her allergies had been identified sooner, we could have eliminated her suffering immediately. Front line health professionals do not always recognize the signs of food allergies in babies. This makes it difficult for parents to access care and support.

Biography

Zoe Williams is a parent of 2 children with different food allergies and intolerances. Her youngest daughter, now aged 4 and a half, was clinically diagnosed with 6 food allergies as a baby. She is an advocate for parents of children with food allergies and food allergy sufferers. She is a food allergy blogger at www.myallergykitchen.com where she shares allergy-friendly recipes, tips and advice to help others. She is in contact with other parents of children with food allergies and food allergy sufferers on a daily basis through her blog and social media accounts.

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