Case 1

* A 25-year-old male ate dinner at a restaurant with his friends. For dinner, he ordered a burger with a side of French fries. Within minutes of his first bite, symptoms began and he died within two hours, even though he was given 10 doses of epinephrine. He was allergic to fish. What caused his food allergy? What could have been done to prevent the allergy?

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*Possible answers: The allergy could have been caused by any of his food that came in contact with fish. Another possibility is that the French fries could have been friend in the same oil used to fry fish. Since he was eating in a restaurant, she should have asked if they use the same oil to fry the different foods or if any of the foods in his meal would come in contact with fish.*

Case 2

* A 16-year-old female with a pecan allergy was at a friend’s house for the holidays. She ate a slice of cheesecake from the local bakery for dessert. Within seconds of her first bite, symptoms occurred and she was given a dose of epinephrine about 20 minutes later. Unfortunately, she died 8 days later. What caused her food allergy? What could have been done to prevent death?

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*Possible answers: Pecans in the crust caused the food allergy. Since it was prepared in the local bakery, she should have asked if there was a food label or if the purchaser of the dessert knew where/how the cheesecake was prepared, if it contained nuts, or was prepared if a facility with nuts. Also, the time between the onset of symptoms and when the epinephrine was administered was too long. The epinephrine should have been administered immediately.*

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Case 3

* A 6-month-old baby was being fed breakfast by his mother. At 9:00AM, he had a bottle of formula (drinking this since birth) and 3 tablespoons of oatmeal cereal (tried for the first time at breakfast). By 11:00AM, a rash broke out on the baby’s chin. As the day went on, the rash got increasingly worse. By 4:00PM, the rash was all over his body. A dose of Benadryl was administered and the rash went away. The baby is new to eating solid foods, so there were no known allergies at the time this occurred. What was the cause of the rash? Was this caused by a food sensitivity/allergy, food intoxication, or foodborne illness?

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*Possible answers: This was a food sensitivity/allergy caused by the oatmeal cereal. Since the baby had been drinking the formula since birth and never had a reaction, it was highly unlikely that he would suddenly become allergic to it. Since nothing else had been introduced that was new to the baby and might cause a similar rash (e.g. detergent, fabric, foods, etc.), the oatmeal cereal was the only possibility.*

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Case 4

* A 14-year-old male with a tree nut allergy ate several cashews while on his way to football practice. He normally does not eat nuts of any kind, since he likes to play it safe due to his allergies. But, he skipped lunch and his friend offered him the cashews as a snack. Symptoms began within minutes. Luckily, one does from his EpiPen was enough to stop the reaction. What caused the food allergy? What could have been done to prevent the reaction?

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*Possible answer: This food allergy was caused by the cashews. In this case, the male was unaware that tree nuts include cashews, and he should have avoided them altogether to be safe. Unfortunately, many individuals struggle with identifying types of tree nuts, which puts them at risk for similar situations.*