

FAI-Sponsored Study Examines Parents' Knowledge and Beliefs

How well do parents understand their children's food allergies? How do they feel about the impact of food allergies on their relationships and daily life? These and other questions were explored in the "first comprehensive study in the U.S. to characterize food allergy knowledge, attitudes and beliefs among parents with food-allergic children," published in the September 2010 issue of [Pediatric Allergy and Immunology](#). The data was drawn from a national, Web-based survey of 2,945 parents, conducted by a team of researchers at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, with funding from FAI.

When tested on their basic knowledge of food allergy, parents' average score was a "solid" 75%. Not surprisingly, parents of with multiple food-allergic children scored higher than parents with one food-allergic child. The majority of the respondents accurately identified the symptoms of an allergic reaction. The authors note that weaknesses "were limited to [questions] assessing food allergy triggers/environmental risks." For example, 52% of parents incorrectly believed that young children are at a higher risk for fatal anaphylaxis than adolescents.

Parents whose children visited an allergist more than three times a year had higher knowledge scores than those who had consultations with primary-care physicians. The authors conclude that "such findings suggest misinformation regarding food allergy among primary care physicians. . .Indeed, it has been shown that few primary care physicians feel comfortable interpreting laboratory test to diagnose food allergy or feel adequately prepared by their medical training to care for children with food allergy. " These findings underscore the need for the [national, standardized food allergy diagnosis and treatment guidelines](#) that will be released by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) this winter.

Among the other key findings:

- 85% of respondents agreed children should carry an EpiPen at school;
- 91% felt schools should have staff trained in food allergy;
- One in four reported that food allergy caused a strain on their marriage/relationship; and
- 40% reported that they experienced hostility from other parents when trying to accommodate their child's food allergy.

The authors concluded that further studies are needed "to expand upon our findings; in particular, an assessment of the of changes in parental knowledge and perceptions over time following the introduction of support services, such as referral to a pediatric allergist or the introduction of uniform school program to keep children safe."

Food Allergy Initiative

© Copyright Food Allergy Initiative. All rights reserved.

[Home](#) | [Login](#) | [Legal Notice](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#)