



Media Release – Monday 14 May 2018.

Kiwis still not feeling safe eating out.

3 out of 4 respondents to a survey on food allergy¹ conducted by Allergy New Zealand reported they had had an allergic reaction when eating away from home. The survey also found 2 out of 3 respondents did not feel confident eating outside their home with their own or their family member's food allergy.

Survey Highlights:

- 75 per cent of NZ respondents had suffered a reaction to food they are allergic to whilst eating away from home. Nearly a third of these were severe.
- Nearly 70 per cent of respondents don't feel confident eating away from home because of their/their family member's food allergy.
- Nearly 90 per cent of respondents don't think people have a good understanding of the seriousness of food allergy.

These findings have been released as a call to action in Food Allergy Awareness Week this week. The organisation calls for the New Zealand public, and particularly those who prepare and serve food, to learn more about the potentially life-threatening effects of food allergy, and how to prepare safe food for their family members, friends or customers.

Mark Dixon, CEO of Allergy New Zealand, says it is really concerning that so many have had reactions even though their food allergy was known to those preparing food. "While most of the reactions occurred in cafes or restaurants, there were a range of places including the homes of friends or family, in schools and also at work events", he said. "The main explanation given by respondents was misunderstanding about the allergen involved and/or the seriousness of their food allergy."

The organisation is also concerned at the impact food allergy has on normal daily life. "We want to see our food allergy community enjoying eating together with friends and family, safely", says Mark. "We would love the new Food Act to have a positive effect in guiding the food service industry to be more confident in offering a safe meal to food allergic customers. It's also a significant market for them".

Wendi Turner, a long-time volunteer for Allergy New Zealand, says at the top of her bucket list would be to celebrate her birthday with her family in a restaurant, "where my daughter can join us for the first time in safely ordering off a menu." Wendi's daughter is 29 years old.

Food Allergy Week is currently underway and runs until Saturday 19 May 2018. For more information head to the Allergy New Zealand website, www.allergy.org.nz

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Reference data on food allergy in New Zealand:

- One in ten infants are likely to have a food allergy by 12 months of age^{2,3}
- A study on New Zealand paediatric hospital admissions for anaphylaxis to food showed a 2.8-fold increase over a 10-year period from 2006- 2015⁴.
- A similar study on hospital admissions for adults for anaphylaxis to food showed a near 2-fold increase over 10 years⁵
- The School Nuts study in Melbourne (publ. Jan 2018) found approximately 1 in 20 ten to fourteen year-old school students have food allergies. This high prevalence suggests that the previously reported rise in food-induced anaphylaxis in this age group reflects an increasing prevalence of food allergy rather than simply increased reporting of anaphylaxis.⁶
- Nine foods cause around 90% of food allergies in New Zealand and Australia; these are required to be declared on labels or by food services on request (under regulations applying to the FSANZ Food Code⁷ and the 2014 Food Act⁸). These foods are: Milk (dairy), egg, peanut, tree-nuts, wheat, soy, shellfish (crustacea and molluscs), fish and sesame.

¹ Survey Monkey – conducted by Allergy New Zealand between Wednesday 19 April and Tuesday 1 May 2018, with 397 responses from an estimated base of 3,000.

² Osborne et al. **Prevalence of challenge-proven IgE-mediated food allergy using population-based sampling and predetermined challenge criteria in infants.** The Journal of allergy and clinical immunology. 2011;127(3):668-76 e1-2. 6

³ Sinclair et al. **IgE-mediated food allergy—diagnosis and management in New Zealand children.** NZMJ, Aug 2013

⁴ Sophie Speakman, Bridget Kool, Jan Sinclair and Penny Fitzharris: **Paediatric food-induced anaphylaxis hospital presentations in New Zealand.** Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2017.

⁵ Bridget Kool, Devika Chandra, Penny Fitzharris. **Adult food-induced anaphylaxis hospital presentations in New Zealand.** Postgrad Med J Published Online First, April 2016.

⁶ Sasaki et al, **Prevalence of clinic-defined food allergy in early adolescence: The SchoolNuts study.** J All Clin Immun, Jan 2018.

⁷ <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/Pages/default.aspx>

⁸ <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/>