



PRESS RELEASE

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As part of its Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Campaign, the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) aims to improve awareness of the increased risk of severe food allergies this holiday season

Food allergies and cooking safely this holiday season

- **EAACI warns of increased food allergy risk during this festive season and offers advice to the public on anaphylaxis, common allergy triggers and how to spot the symptoms of a severe reaction**
- **Recent study published on the [EAACI Journal – Clinical and Translational Allergy](#) makes recommendations to those food allergy sufferers traveling abroad**

Zurich (Switzerland) 13.12.2012 – The holiday season is a time that fills most with delight, especially at the thought of that family feast that awaits them. However, according to the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI), this year 17 million food allergy sufferers across Europe will worry about the increased risk of severe reactions and anaphylaxis that holiday dining brings.

Anaphylaxis refers to a severe allergic reaction which is rapid in onset, and which can even lead to death through cardiac or respiratory arrest. EAACI studies show that incidences of allergic reactions and anaphylactic shocks have been on a steady rise over the past ten years. Allergies in children up to five years have doubled over this period while, the number of emergency room visits for severe anaphylactic reactions have increased seven-fold. EAACI currently estimates that in the next decade, more than half of the European population may experience some form of allergy at some point in their lives. The Academy assumes such developments to the ever-evolving lifestyles and environmental changes which accompany the continuous process of urbanisation and globalisation.

Watch what you eat!

EAACI recommends party hosts to be mindful when preparing their menus, ensuring that any guests' allergies are taken into account throughout the festivities. Sufferers themselves are advised to make sure to communicate any food related concerns they may have, take the proper precautions necessary to avoid triggers, and importantly to be sure to carry their adrenaline pen. EAACI believes that this last message is most vital to the 3.5 million European sufferers between 15 and 24 years old. The Academy's studies show that this "high risk" demographic group is more inclined to taking risks when it comes to carrying adrenaline pens, avoiding triggers and assessing risk in certain

situations.

According to EAACI, more than 120 foods have been identified as potential allergy triggers. The most common culprits causing serious allergic reactions among children include: milk, egg, peanut and tree nuts, followed by cereals (mainly wheat), soybeans, fish, and shellfish. In adults the most common triggers are shellfish, certain vegetables, tree nuts and peanuts. The onset of an anaphylactic shock is typically quite sudden (anywhere from a few minutes up to two hours), deteriorates rapidly and can potentially result in death without the administration of adrenaline.

Severe food allergy reaction symptoms:

- A red raised itchy skin rash
- Swelling of eyes, lips, hands and feet
- Narrowing of airways which can cause breathing difficulties and wheezing
- Feeling like there is a lump inside the throat
- A sudden drop in blood pressure which can cause faintness or dizziness
- Nausea & vomiting
- A strange metallic taste in the mouth
- Sore, red, or itchy eyes

“Increasing awareness of severe reactions and safe dining this holiday season, forms part of our [Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Campaign](#). This campaign will also include a European public declaration with the message that, like defibrillators, which are publicly available, adrenaline pens need to be recognised as life-saving tools. Our hope is to improve public knowledge and education on food allergy and to increase access to adrenaline pens in public places and schools. Children are a particularly vulnerable group, with one third of all allergic shocks occurring for the first time at school with teachers largely unprepared” states Prof. Antonella Muraro, Head of the EAACI Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Campaign.

EAACI travel recommendations

A recent study published in the [EAACI journal – Clinical and Translational Allergy](#) highlights how travelling abroad is a particularly risky and worrying endeavor for allergy sufferers. In the study, 9% of participants reported adverse reactions on aircraft, 80% of which were moderate or severe. It also indicates that only 38% of patients who requested special consideration from an airline due to food allergy actually received satisfactory assistance.

Another issue underlined in the study relates to improper food labeling laws (outside of the European Union). This combined with a patient’s inability to speak the language, clearly limits the extent to which some patients can travel. Some study participants also reported that they never travel overseas, as they perceive the risk to be too great.

EAACI advises severe allergy sufferers travelling this year to take the necessary precautions. Firstly, in advance of your trip, ask your allergist to prepare a letter, in English, indicating your allergy and the need to carry your drugs with you at all times, even during flights. In-flight, ensure to warn staff about your condition and keep your adrenaline pen close to hand. If in doubt about airline food, be sure to carry your own safe snacks. Once you have reached your destination, when buying food, always remember to check labels carefully. In many countries, ingredients labels must include commonly allergenic foods, even when present in small amounts, however not all countries enforce such laws. Therefore, unless you find allergen-free labels, it is better if you avoid snacks and precooked food. For more safety information and resources, EAACI provides information and many resources on their “[Infoallergy](#)” website. Resources include printable allergy cards, which can be translated into 27 languages.

About EAACI's Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Guidelines

EAACI will work throughout the year 2012-2013 to establish comprehensive guidelines on Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis covering diagnosis, treatment, management in the community and prevention that embrace all the different stakeholders: Clinicians, Immunologists, Epidemiologists, Food Technologists, Food Industry Research Department Representatives, Regulatory Bodies, Allied Health Representatives, and Patient Organisations, among others.

About EAACI

The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, EAACI, is a non-profit organisation active in the field of allergic and immunologic diseases such as asthma, rhinitis, eczema, occupational allergy, food and drug allergy and anaphylaxis. EAACI was founded in 1956 in Florence and has become the largest medical association in Europe in the field of allergy and clinical immunology. It includes over 7,700 members from 121 countries, and all of the National Allergy Societies from Europe.

www.eaaci.org

www.stopanaphylaxis.com

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