

Survey shows that nearly 1 in 3 children with food allergies experience bullying

December 24 2012

Nearly a third of children diagnosed with food allergies who participated in a recent study are bullied, according to researchers at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Almost eight percent of children in the U.S. are allergic to foods such as peanuts, tree-nuts, milk, eggs, and shellfish.

Nearly half of parents surveyed (47.9 percent) were not aware of the bullying—although both the bullied [children](#) and their parents reported experiencing higher [stress levels](#) and lower quality of life.

The study, titled, "Child and Parental Reports of Bullying in a Consecutive Sample of Children with [Food Allergy](#)," appears in the online issue of *Pediatrics* on December 24. The study was led by Eyal Shemesh, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Dr. Shemesh and his team surveyed 251 pairs of parents and children. The patient and parent pairs were consecutively recruited during allergy clinic visits to independently answer questionnaires. Bullying due to food allergy or for any cause, quality of life, and distress in both the child and parent were evaluated using validated [questionnaires](#).

"Parents and pediatricians should routinely ask children with food allergy about bullying," said Dr. Shemesh. "Finding out about the child's experience might allow targeted interventions, and would be expected to reduce additional stress and improve quality of life for these children trying to manage their food allergies." Dr. Shemesh is Director of EMPOWER (Enhancing, Managing, and Promoting Well-being and

[Resiliency](#)), a program within Mount Sinai's Jaffe Food Allergy Institute. Dr. Shemesh is also Chief of the Division of Behavioral and Developmental Health in the Department of Pediatrics at The Mount Sinai Medical Center.

"When parents are aware of the bullying, the child's quality of life is better," said the senior author, Scott H. Sicherer, MD, Professor of [Pediatrics](#), Chief, Division of Pediatric Allergy, Co-Director, EMPOWER program. "Our results should raise awareness for parents, school personnel, and physicians to proactively identify and address bullying in this population."

The work for the study was supported by the EMPOWER program, a program funded by a generous donation from the Jaffe Family Foundation, that is devoted to understanding and enhancing the quality of life of persons with food allergy.

Provided by The Mount Sinai Hospital

Citation: Survey shows that nearly 1 in 3 children with food allergies experience bullying (2012, December 24) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-survey-children-food-allergies-bullying.html>

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